STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION TRADITIONS

Angels of Light?

Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period

Edited by

Clare Copeland & Jan Machielsen

SERIES EDITOR

Andrew Colin Gow

BRILL

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LEIDEN · BOSTON
2013

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2012952309

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ISSN 1573-4188
ISBN 978-90-04-23369-0 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-23370-6 (e-book)

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For

Robin, Lyndal, and Nick

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EDITORS' ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This collection of essays emerges from a conference held at Balliol College, Oxford in May 2011. We would like to thank all the participants for their helpful comments and for cultivating a series of stimulating discussions. Special acknowledgment is due to the John Fell Oxford University Press (OUP) Research Fund and the History Faculty of the University of Oxford for their generous financial support. Jeremy Hinchliff (Balliol College, Oxford), Owen McKnight (Jesus College, Oxford), Judith W. Mann, and Ton van der Gulik, O.Carm. provided invaluable assistance with some of the images in this volume. We are grateful to Andrew Gow for his encouragement and to two anonymous reviewers for their comments and advice. We also thank Arjan van Dijk and Ivo Romein at Brill for their support and assistance in bringing this volume to print.

The editors owe a particular debt of gratitude to Robin Briggs, Nicholas Davidson, and Lyndal Roper. They have been inspirational teachers, generous with their wisdom and selfless in their encouragement. This book is dedicated to them.

Oxford, 15 October 2012

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INTRODUCTION

CLARE COPELAND & JAN MACHIELSEN

In his *Cautio Criminalis* (1631–32) the German Jesuit and witchcraft sceptic Friedrich Spee recalled—or invented—a discussion between an unnamed prince and an anonymous clergyman.[1] Over dinner the prince confessed his fear "that the master of a thousand arts [the devil] deceives his lackeys [the witches]" and that innocent men and women were denounced for attending the witches' sabbath who had not, in fact, been there. It was a scruple which the clergyman, "with the instantly shrill and excessive zeal of those who usually do not philosophize more than four feet from their heater," dismissed. God would never permit the devil to assume the image of an innocent woman or man at the sabbath: a prince could proceed safely. This was the answer that the prince had hoped for, but for the priest his assurances rebounded in a way he had not foreseen. "Truly," the prince informed the priest, "I regret your fate, for you have condemned yourself out of your own mouth in a capital crime [. . . for] no less than fifteen witches confessed that they saw you at their sabbaths." We may be inclined to think that Spee fabricated the story in order to impart a bigger truth—he did not deem it necessary "to identify the place and people" involved—but it was Scripture that taught the Jesuit that his view was at least possible: If "the devil can transform himself into an angel in order to ruin souls [. . .] Why can he not transform himself into an innocent person so that he may ruin her body?"

The biblical basis for Spee's argument was 2 Corinthians 11:14: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."[2] Yet this warning, issued by the apostle Paul, invites two dis-

[1] Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld, *Cautio Criminalis, or a Book on Witch Trials*, trans. Marcus Hellyer (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 196–97.

[2] This and subsequent translations in this introduction come from the Authorised King James Version.

tinct, and in many ways contrary, readings. On one level, this is a warning about a possible discrepancy between truth and appearance: what *appears* true is not necessarily true. The "angel of light" became a code word for deception and a well-worn literary trope at that. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, Mr Wickham, "who, but three months before, had been almost an angel of light," ultimately revealed himself to be a man of poor moral standing, "the wickedest young man in the world."[3] Paul's warning invites scepticism, calling on Christians to question the veracity and authenticity of what they perceive. But how were they to discern true content from the label on the box, especially when the two might be diametrically opposed and yet appear the same? In this reading, 2 Corinthians recalls the injunction of 1 John 4:1—"believe not every spirit"—and this is one of the references with which Thomas Aquinas glossed the passage.[4]

Early modern Christians engaged in the discernment of spirits with the understanding that there was more than one possible answer. From the outset, such discernment involved a degree of scepticism which complicates narratives about the chronological disenchantment of the world. With the possibility of doubt and deception in mind, it is hardly surprising that 2 Cor. 11:14 came to be seen as part of an assault on the reliability of the senses. The Spanish physician Juan Huarte de San Juan (1529–88), for instance, identified Satan's transfiguration as "works of the [corrupted] imagination."[5] Commenting on the same passage, one mid-sixteenth-century English Protestant observed that the devil "captivates oure sences so fond and phantastical that we doubt not to deme the day to be nighte."[6] As Stuart Clark shows in this volume, depicting this

[3] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. 48.

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *Super II epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura* ch. 11, lectio 3, para. 407, http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/c2c.html (University of Navarre).

[5] Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de ingenios para las sciencias* (Baeça, 1594), fol. 190v. "todas estas propriedades, bien se entiende que son obras de la ymaginativa." Huarte goes on to outline how a "temperamento muy caliente" disturbed both the imagination and begot the three main vices of pride, gluttony and "luxuria," again in reference to Paul: "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." (Romans 16:18)

[6] Edmund Becke, *A Brefe Confutatacion of this Most Detestable, Anabaptistical Opinion, that Christ dyd not take Hys Flesh of the Blessed Vyrgyn Mary nor Any Corporal Substaunce of Her Body* (London, 1550), fol. 2r.

problem of vision in *visual* terms presented an insoluble conundrum for Renaissance artists.[7]

Yet 2 Cor. 11:14—and Spee's use of it—also invites a second reading. While discernment by its very nature involved a degree of scepticism, Paul's words also reminded Christians of the terrifying power of the devil who, as Aquinas warned, could show himself "to be either an angel of God or sometimes Christ."[8] By urging the Christians of Corinth to beware of demonic deceptions, Paul was also reminding them of the devil's abilities. Read in this way, the passage becomes an assertion of the devil's *pseudo*-omnipotence. In his *Daemonologie* (1597), King James VI of Scotland referred to the passage when discussing the raising of the Prophet Samuel by the Witch of Endor, an event which for Protestants, in the absence of purgatory, had to involve both divine permission and a demonic disguise. As James wrote, "that the Diuel is permitted at som-times to put himself in the liknes of the Saintes, it is plaine in the Scriptures, where it is said, that Sathan can transforme himselfe into an Angell of light."[9] Paul's warning meant that the devil could appear not only in the likeness of an angel but could masquerade in all shapes and sizes. Friedrich Spee's discussion of the witches' sabbath reflected both readings of Paul: the Jesuit induced scepticism by questioning the reliability of the senses and hence the feasibility of the successful prosecution of witches, but he did so by further extending the realm of the demonic.

The very existence of Paul's warning added to the conundrum for it meant that no believer could claim ignorance as an excuse for seduction by devils and heretics.[10] But if Paul's words served to

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[7] On concerns about the accuracy of the senses, see also Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

[8] Aquinas, *Super II epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura* ch. 11, lectio 3, para. 406. "ostendens se esse vel Angelum Dei, vel aliquando Christum."

[9] James VI and I, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue, diuided into Three Bookes* (Edinburgh, 1597), 4. Heinrich Bullinger also cited 2 Cor. 11:14 in connection to the raising of Samuel in sermon 49 of his *Sermonum decades quinque,* translated into English as Heinrich Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons diuided into Five Decades* (London, 1577), 733.

[10] This point is made in relation to 2 Cor. 11:14 by Wolfgang Musculus, *Loci communes sacrae theologiae* (Basle, 1564), 615 who also gives the example of Eve's temptation in the garden of Eden. The passage is also marshalled to make the same point (in relation to ignorance of demons as opposed to heretics) in Petrus Binsfeld, *Tractatus de confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum*, 2nd ed. (Trier, 1591), 65. The point

remind Christians of the devil's power, commentators were nevertheless aware of the power of God. Discernment was vital precisely because it held up the possibility of unveiling divine truths as well as demonic deception. The injunction to "believe not every spirit" might have appeared to be a simple call for scepticism, but the purpose of testing such spirits was to see "whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1) as much as from any other source. There was acute awareness that divine messages might be transmitted by a variety of forms: Christ, angels, the saints (to name but a few). It was precisely because God *did* reveal himself in visions and dreams—as seen on numerous occasions in the Bible—that discerning the origin of any of these phenomena was of such concern.

Not surprisingly, the matter became one of special urgency and concern during the period of the European Reformations, when claims to religious truth were invariably contested. Yet, in approaching the discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*) both Catholics and Protestants built upon the work of their medieval forebears. The subject had been of considerable concern to theologians during the papal schism (1378–1417) when they faced a situation of institutional uncertainty which female mystics in particular sought to resolve.[11] The theologian Jean Gerson (1363–1429) was clearly aware of both demonic deceptions and divine interventions when he pondered what to do with claims of revelations.[12] "If we immediately deny everything or ridicule the matter or accuse the person," he wrote, "we will seem to weaken the authority of divine revelation, which is just as powerful now as it once was." Moreover, to suggest that all revelations and prophecies were illusions would scandalize believers and thus, he concluded, "we are obliged to find a middle way."[13] It is precisely this charting of a middle way that occupies the present collection of essays.

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of ignorance of Christian doctrine in general not being an excuse for Christians is, of course, a common one.

[11] Dyan Elliott, "Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (2002): 26–54.

[12] Gerson, for example, opens his treatise *De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis* (On Distinguishing True from False Revelations, 1402) with the prophecy received by Zechariah concerning the name of his son John (Luke 1:13). Gerson asks how we can know that this was "an angelic act rather than a diabolical illusion." Gerson, *Early Works*, trans. and intro. Brian McGuire (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 335.

[13] Gerson, *Early Works*, 337.

Gerson stands as a giant in the field of *discretio* and his three treatises on the subject remained important long after the confessional rupture of the sixteenth century. Already in his first treatise, *De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis* (On Distinguishing True from False Revelations, 1402), Gerson turned to the attacks of heretics to add weight to the importance of discernment: "As the true expression of religion comes under attack through heretics' sophistical and false arguments, so too lying angels try to abrogate the authority of true and holy revelations through sophistical deeds and the trickery of magicians."[14] For Gerson, writing at the turn of the fifteenth century and in the context of the papal schism, the fame and renown of women visionaries such as Bridget of Sweden (1303–73) and Catherine of Siena (1347–80) was particularly troubling in the light of their claims to speak about papal politics.[15] But the warning not to believe all appearances provided a useful weapon against opponents to any position or set of beliefs, for if the devil could disguise himself then what appeared to be God's will might, in fact, turn out to be the exact opposite. As Dyan Elliott has shown, Gerson's scepticism about the prophecies of Bridget of Sweden marred his later attempt to vindicate Joan of Arc against her Anglo-Burgundian critics; the theologian's own language could be, and was, employed against him.[16]

In light of the lively medieval discussion of the discernment of spirits it is hardly surprising that it has been seen foremost as a Catholic concept and concern. The ten essays collected in this volume, however, testify to the importance of *discretio spirituum* to Catholics and Protestants alike.[17] As Euan Cameron shows, the onset of the Reformation saw the reconfiguration of angelic beings rather than their demise. Within the post-Reformation religious landscape, Paul's warning invited both Protestants and Catholics to integrate

[14] Gerson, *Early Works*, 335.

[15] In this volume we have refrained from using the title "saint" when the status of the person was still contended and official sainthood was thus just one possible—and typically unlikely—outcome that was only granted after a person's death. Such an approach also suits the multi-confessional scope of the contributions that follow.

[16] Elliott, "Seeing Double," esp. 47–50.

[17] For a recent discussion of discernment as a shared concern for Catholics and Protestants, see Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), esp. 261–321.

the existence of rival confessions within their worldviews by attributing them to demonic wiles and temptations. For those believing that the Last Days might be drawing near the importance of discerning spirits and identifying false prophets was especially urgent. The evangelists Mark and Matthew had both pointed specifically to the appearance of "false Christs" and "false prophets" at this time who would, if it were possible, even deceive the elect (Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:24). According to the book of Revelation, as the Last Days approached, Satan would be liberated from his "prison" and would go out to deceive all the nations (Revelation 20:7–8). The identification of false prophets and visionaries was therefore read by some as a sign that the end was nigh and added to their (post-Reformation) millenarian fervour.

For the Catholic Church, the discernment of saints was foremost, but by no means exclusively, an institutional concern. Visionary experience was certainly not a requirement for official sainthood. Indeed, one Catholic visionary of this period, Teresa of Avila (1515–82), warned that "there are many holy persons who have never received one of these favours [mystical gifts]; and others who receive them but are not holy."[18] The Catholic criteria for sainthood were virtuous lives and miracles *after* death, always to be approved posthumously. And yet, the saintly reputations of individuals clearly were influenced by claims to extraordinary supernatural experiences. Tightening definitions of holiness was an important part of the bureaucratic reforms that characterised the Church of Rome in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A principal concern was the over-hasty identification of saints by devotees—whilst they were alive or only shortly after they had died—before the authorities had had a chance to assess (and approve) their saintliness.[19] The unofficial holy reputations of would-be-saints were often prompted by claims to receive visions. Accordingly, the discernment of spirits was not only a topic of interest for the Congregation of Rites which investigated canonization processes; it was also a concern for the

[18] Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 6.9.16. Teresa's comment might have been influenced by Jesus's reminder to the apostle Thomas in the gospel of John: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

[19] On reforms to the canonization process, see Simon Ditchfield, "Tridentine Worship and the Cults of Saints," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion, 1500–1660*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 201–24.

Holy Office as it sought to silence and control dubious visionaries. Even after death, the Holy Office maintained an interest in the canonization of saints in terms of censoring devotional cults lacking official approval.[20] For both Catholics and Protestants, the discernment of holiness was further complicated because divine visions were not a straightforward sign of sanctity, nor were demonic assaults a sure sign of a lack of holiness, as the model of Saint Anthony of Egypt indicated.

Although rejecting the cult of saints, Protestants had martyrs, heroes, and even visionaries of their own whose actions were worthy of study, recollection, and second-hand discernment. Many Protestants retained a place for wonders. The laity in particular only reluctantly embraced the doctrine that miracles had ceased with the Early Church.[21] Like Catholics, Protestants heeded Paul's warning against false outward appearances but often applied it to the superstitious ceremonies of the Catholic Church, many of which were linked to public devotions and liturgies. The Danish theologian Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600), for instance, warned in relation to 2 Cor. 11:14 of the devil's countenance "when he giveth superstition a counterfaite face of holinesse: when he dealeth in this wise, then he lieth in waite craftilie to catch us. To them therefore, which are not furnished with the whole armour of God, the diuell is more terrible, furious, violent, and prevailing."[22] George Abbot (1562–1633), an Oxford theologian and later archbishop of Canterbury, preached at the university church of St Mary the Virgin that "ceremonies and the shew which is outward, do not ever import verity of religion" because "hypocrites and dissemblers [...] in outward and externall

[20] Miguel Gotor, *I beati del papa: Santità, inquisizione, e obbedienza in età moderna* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2002).

[21] See Philip Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant Imagination: The Evangelical Wonder Book in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), esp 31–32. Soergel's work builds on that of D. P. Walker, especially "The Cessation of Miracles," in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen Debus (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library; London: Associated University Presses, 1988), 111–24. Walker argues that the doctrine of the "cessation of miracles" was formulated in answer to both Catholic use of miracles as signs of divine favour, and Reformed extremists claiming miracle-working powers. For England, highlighting the continuation of miracles in popular culture, see also Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006).

[22] Niels Hemmingsen, *The Epistle of the Blessed Apostle Saint Paule* (London, 1580), 223.

points of religion, can go as farre as the faithfull, or the best child of God."[23]

Thus the warning of 2 Cor. 11:14 encompassed not only false visions and prophecies but false doctrine as well, and as such, it could bolster the criticisms of Catholics and Protestants alike. Erasmus used the passage to denounce Luther's "paradoxes" in a letter to the Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli;[24] Philipp Melanchthon deployed it against Henry VIII's conservative Six Articles.[25] Calvin employed it in the preface to his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first ed., 1536) in which he rejected the (false) miracles which Catholics attributed to their saints, and which they demanded from their Protestant opponents as a sign of divine approval.[26] And among Catholics, the Polish cardinal Stanisław Hozjusz (1504–79) applied the concept to the problem of heresy, warning the faithful of "heretics transformed into angels of light" who mis-explained Scripture.[27]

Such highly polemical use of Paul's passage suited the context in which the apostle had first warned of the devil's minions: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." (2 Cor. 11:15) And it was in the light of the devil's human followers that Paul was also understood. As Aquinas noted, in a passage already cited in part,

> just as true apostles are sent by God and formed (*informantur*) by him, so Satan, who is their leader and encourager, transforms (*transformat*) himself into an angel of light, showing himself to be either an angel of God or sometimes Christ. It is therefore not very surprising, if his

[23] George Abbot, *An Exposition upon the Prophet Ionah contained in Certaine Sermons preached in S. Maries Church in Oxford* (London, 1600), 170 (Lecture 8).

[24] Erasmus to Huldrych Zwingli, Basel 31 August [1523] (Letter 1384). Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 1356 to 1534*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974–), vol. 10 (1992), trans. R. A. B. Mynors and Alexander Dalzell, 80–85, here 81.

[25] "The Copie of Melancthons Epistle Sent to King Henry, against the Cruel Act of the VI. Articles," in *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and Memorable, happenyng in the Church with an Vniuersall History of the Same*, ed. John Foxe, vol. 2 (London, 1583), 1172–76, here 1173.

[26] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, preface, sec. 3. "These miracles, they [the Catholics] say, are done neither by idols, nor by magicians, nor by false prophets, but by the saints. As if we did not understand that to 'disguise himself as an angel of light' is the craft of Satan!"

[27] Stanisław Hozjusz, *De expresso Dei verbo, libellus, his temporibus accommodatissimus*, in *Opera omnia* (Antwerp, 1571), 313–31, here 315. See the marginal gloss "Haeretici in Angelos lucis transfigurati."

> ministers, certainly fictitiously, transform themselves into ministers of justice, that is, they simulate being just.[28]

Given its suitability for polemical purposes, 2 Cor. 11:14 unsurprisingly proved to be both stabilising and destabilising for all sides. Satan's splendid transfiguration was a useful, defensive weapon, a tool for demonizing the seemingly good. Even in the Reformed tradition, where the only mark of accuracy that a vision could possess was its congruence with Scripture, the potential for deception and falsehood voiced by Paul had unsettling implications.[29] The uncertainty about outward signs which Paul's warning invited—and which Hemmingsen and Abbot both embraced in their condemnation of superstition—could also powerfully bolster criticisms of the doctrine of double predestination. When an anonymous English "Anabaptist" denounced the resulting unknowability of salvation, he argued that the elect and reprobate would be indistinguishable in public view: marks of salvation, he contended, were publicly evident, for "God never doeth transforme himself into an Angell of darkness."[30] In answer, the Scottish reformer John Knox conceded that "sometimes the reprobate do beautifully shyne in the eyes of men for a space, as exemples be evident."[31] Nevertheless, he argued that the distinction between the elect and reprobate was sufficiently evident: from election comes faith, and from faith, good works which offer testimony to others. Knox wondered at his opponent's attempt to label 2 Cor. 11:14 as a (specious) proof for the doctrine of

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[28] Aquinas, *Super II epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura* cap. 11, l. 3, para. 406. "sicut veri apostoli mittuntur a Deo et informantur ab ipso, sic *Satanas transformat se in Angelum lucis*, qui est dux et incentor eorum, ostendens se esse vel Angelum Dei, vel aliquando Christum. Non est ergo mirum neque magnum si ministri eius, scilicet pseudo, transformant se in ministros iustitiae, id est simulant se esse iustos."

[29] See Calvin, *Institutes* I.ix.2. "Lest Satan should insinuate himself under his name, he [God] wishes us to recognise him by the image which he has stamped on the Scriptures. The author of the Scriptures cannot vary, and change his likeness."

[30] John Knox, *An Answer to a Great Nomber of Blasphemous Cauillations written by an Anabaptist* ([Geneva], 1560), 191. The manuscript in question, possibly written by Robert Cooche, a former friend of Knox's, was published as part of the reformer's refutation. Knox wrote *An Answer* while in exile in Geneva in 1558. The work, his longest, was printed there after his departure. See Jane E. A. Dawson, "Knox, John (c. 1514–1572)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15781, sec. "The Implications of Predestination."

[31] Knox, *An Answer*, 203.

predestination, adding that "I, for my owne part do protest before ye Lord Iesus, that I neuer did so understand that place of ye Apostle."[32]

The idea of the devil appearing as an angel of light was a powerful tool within confessional conflicts of all types. For the Spanish theologian Melchor or Melchior Cano (1509–60), 2 Cor. 11:14 provided ammunition for his criticism of the Society of Jesus, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and the personal holiness of Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), whom he believed to be falsely claiming to receive visions.[33] Susan Schreiner has explored how Cano moved beyond matters of individual holiness to question the Society as a whole. The Dominican friar argued that the Jesuits only *appeared* to be involved in good works (preaching, almsgiving, etc.). Cano claimed that the devil used the *Spiritual Exercises* to lead astray Jesuits and non-Jesuits alike by encouraging anyone to believe that they were contemplatives. Thus Paul's warning not only inspired ferocious theological debate and the censure of some would-be visionaries, but also contributed to public struggles between individuals and groups of believers belonging to the same religious community. Discernment could not only be used to censure and condemn; it empowered sceptics and believers alike.

Four major themes emerge from the essays collected in this volume that together make a fresh argument for the importance of discernment to the history of early modern Europe. These themes build on, and enter into a dialogue with, Moshe Sluhovsky's *Believe Not Every Spirit* (2007).[34] In his masterful contribution to the history of discernment Sluhovsky stresses the connections between developments in mysticism, exorcism, and discernment techniques in early modern Catholicism. The first aim of the contributions to this volume has been to link discernment to an even wider range of issues. True, discernment was first and foremost a matter for

[32] Knox, *An Answer*, 204.

[33] Terence O'Reilly, ed., "Melchor Cano's 'Censura y parecer contra el Instituto de los Padres Jesuitas': A Transcription of the British Library Manuscript," in *From Ignatius of Loyola to John of the Cross*, ed. Terence O'Reilly (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), ch. 5, 11–22 (page numbering refers to ch. 5 alone). Note the references to 2 Cor. 11:14 on 12 and 16. For the discussion that follows, see Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*, 272–74.

[34] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

visionaries: Catholics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross (explored by Colin Thompson), or a prophet such as the Lutheran Paul Felgenhauer (studied by Leigh Penman). But the possibility of deception meant that the concept of discernment had much wider significance. Anthony Ossa-Richardson shows that for the Reformed theologian Gijsbert Voet or Voetius, wrong *discretio spirituum* was a code for the Cartesian privileging of "private reason" over Scripture, whereas right *discretio spirituum* (as granted to the evangelists) had created Scripture in the first place. Victoria Van Hyning demonstrates in her study of a convent of Benedictine nuns in Cambrai that concerns about discernment could colour debates about a cleric's power and influence, and raise doubts about the methods of prayer taught not just to individuals but to whole communities. Meanwhile, as Jan Machielsen and Stuart Clark both argue, the discernment of spirits was an issue of vital importance for hagiographers and visual artists (or rather, visual hagiographers) who, although far removed from the original experiences of any visionaries, were nevertheless called on to interpret them "second-hand." Whereas scholars have hitherto centred their discussion of discernment on the claims of visionaries or the possessed, the essays included here call for a fresh interpretation of discernment that places it amongst bigger questions concerning the relationship between authority and religious experience on both the individual and communal level.

Secondly, Moshe Sluhovsky has made a compelling case for the study of discerning spirits as a collaborative process in which an exorcist or confessor worked with a spiritually inclined woman to construct a narrative of divine grace or (much more frequently) demonic possession.[35] This volume seeks to apply this understanding of *discretio* as a communal process more widely. The examples outlined above suggest that discernment was of public interest to Christians of all persuasions in the struggle to claim the authority to interpret Scripture and define holiness. In particular, we suggest that debate and disagreement should not be seen solely in negative terms. Beliefs and concerns relating to *discretio spirituum* were kept alive when they might otherwise have fallen dormant by fractious (intra-) confessional debates of the sort briefly outlined above.

[35] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, esp. 8.

The contested nature of the discernment of spirits—the fact that virtually every debate involved adherents as well as opponents—reinforced points of view. Victoria Van Hyning, in her chapter on Augustine Baker, suggests that Baker's prayer methods may not have become as popular had they not been contested. A similar argument can be made for the philosophical controversies of the later seventeenth century. Anthony Ossa-Richardson argues that Cartesian philosophy focused renewed attention on the issue of discernment of spirits among Descartes's opponents. And as Laura Sangha explores in her chapter, Hobbesian materialism did not settle old debates but brought them back to life. Interest in the discernment of spirits continued to flourish in part because it was fed by, and attempted to settle, other debates.

Thirdly and crucially, the contributions that follow stress that although discernment was considered difficult, it was not thought impossible. Given how vast the problems surrounding *discretio spirituum* were this may seem counterintuitive. Thomas Aquinas, in his gloss on 2 Cor. 11:14, had pointed out "that Satan sometimes transforms himself visibly, as he did to Saint Martin [of Tours] so that he could deceive him, and in that way he deceived many. But the discernment of spirits, which God especially granted to Saint Anthony, is effective and necessary against this."[36] The inclusion of a saint among the deceived is an ominous sign. Moreover, as Stuart Clark shows, the example of St Anthony as the most able of discerners was far from reassuring. Anthony's skill at discernment was "necessary" to avoid being deceived as "many" had been; yet this skill was conferred specially by God, and how others might obtain it remained tantalisingly unclear. Anthony's example also pointed out that resistance to demonic assaults and temptations could be a compelling mark of sanctity. Aquinas, following Paul (2 Cor. 11:15, "whose end shall be according to their works"), only advised his reader that a demon's work would always lead to evil, even if it might pretend to good ends at the beginning.[37] Aquinas provided an unsettling exam-

[36] Aquinas, *Super II epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura* cap. 11, l. 3, para. 407. "Notandum autem est, quod Satanas transfigurat se aliquando visibiliter, sicut beato Martino, ut deciperet eum, et hoc modo multos decepit. Sed ad hoc valet et necessaria est discretio spirituum, quam specialiter Deus contulit beato Antonio."

[37] 1 John 4:3. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

ple to illustrate this point: an unnamed monk who was committed to never leaving his cell was inspired "invisibiliter" (invisibly) by the devil to go to church and receive communion. This seemingly innocuous act was, on the contrary, the first step on a slippery slope to perdition.[38]

Given the superficial similarities of the demonic and the divine—different in all *but* appearances—how were Christians of the early modern period to discern truth from falsehood? Sluhovsky has emphasized the extreme difficulties involved in the discernment of spirits for early modern Catholics, attributing a trend towards the "criminalization" of "simulated sanctity" to "admissions of failure" on the part of Catholic theologians who were frustrated by "trying, hope against hope, to stabilize an experience that was beyond their control."[39] The impossibility of discerning visions according to their (divine or demonic) content focused the attention of exorcists and confessors on the moral standing of their recipients. The subsequent negative view of visionary experience was fed by their misogyny. This volume shows that the focus on the morality of visionaries was not exclusively a Catholic concern, as Leigh Penman explores the self-chastisement of Paul Felgenhauer, a failed Lutheran prophet; and R. J. Scott demonstrates a similar emphasis in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that visions *were* successfully discerned and authenticated across a wide range of situations. The late sixteenth century saw Catholics reconfigure exorcism into a means of spiritual interrogation, but it also witnessed the first canonization of a saint for sixty-three years.[40] Any theoretical impossibility, then, did not unduly influence practice: signs of holiness could always be challenged, but this did not mean that they always were. On one level, the discernment of spirits was literally

[38] Aquinas, *Super II epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura* cap. 11, l. 3, para. 407.

[39] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 191. On simulated sanctity, see in particular Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991), esp. 9–36; and Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001).

[40] This salient detail was the starting point for Peter Burke, "How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint," reprinted in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David M. Luebke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 129–42. It is, however, important to note that the papacy recognized fourteen non-universal cults between 1524 and 1588. See, in particular, Ditchfield, "Tridentine Worship," 207.

definitional. It was a charism, a special, individual gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10), given to some (like Anthony) and not to others. Yet, as the contributions to this volume show, it would be wrong to project the definitional impossibility of discernment onto the source material. The belief that discernment was a special gift coexisted with a sense that there were indeed ways to "test" influences (1 John 4:2–3). Discerning the claims of visionaries was always a public process, subject to the forming of communal consensus. Early modern Christians could draw on a vast arsenal of authorities—Scripture, prelates, Church Fathers, learned theologians, signs and miracles, and experiential knowledge—in order to discern. Even if arguments could not be definitive, alternative voices (such as the English Anabaptist criticising predestination, or Melchor Cano attacking the *Spiritual Exercises*) could be silenced. In multiconfessional Europe assent never needed to be universal, and as already noted, criticism from opponents could even be empowering.

This brings us to the fourth and final theme stressed in this volume. By their very nature, visions were an individual experience, but their discernment was of a wider significance. As Sluhovsky has shown convincingly, cases of mass possession amongst Catholic Europe's female religious invited discernment not only by the (divinely or demonically) possessed nuns themselves but by an arsenal of exorcists and theologians.[41] This wider communal involvement was the norm, not the exception. Indeed, visionary experiences would not have come down to us had they remained private. Whilst the recipients of visions were themselves called upon to discern the origins of their own experiences, wider bodies of believers were also engaged in discernment, struggling to classify, report, and depict the experiences of others. As Colin Thompson shows, however certain Teresa of Avila herself felt about the origins of her experiences, she nevertheless desperately sought a confessor who would understand her and felt greatly troubled by those who were convinced she was deluded. The process of discernment, then, is best understood as a social and communal one. The idea that visions invited public scrutiny needs no argument. Visions and visionaries could pose a challenge to authority, not least because the danger of false visions was that a person might deceive many.

[41] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 259.

But it is easy to lose track of the fact that, among all the concern and anxiety about false or diabolical experiences, true revelations might nourish and instruct a whole community. The question *Cui bono?*—What was at stake?—clearly brings out the theological difficulties involved in the act of discernment, but it does so at the risk of ignoring the personal stake that bystanders and participants had in correct discernment.[42] Divine gifts and the holy reputations they fostered could also be shared with others; they allowed others to participate in the divine. It is with this in mind that Clare Copeland explores the visionary experiences of Maria Maddelena de' Pazzi (1566–1607) recorded in detail by her fellow nuns who discerned their meaning, observed her countenance and sought her holiness. Their transfer of Maria Maddelena's visions and sanctity onto paper—and assuming responsibility for any mistakes—played an important role in authenticating their sister's experiences. Similarly, Jan Machielsen shows how the imitative aspect of the cult of saints offered a group of Jesuit hagiographers the possibility of participating in the sanctity of their objects of study. The textual nature of their source material meant that discernment was no longer a pressing concern. Instead, the truth of their sources became an act of faith and any dubious facts were dismissed as inconvenient, scribal interpolations, the product of textual corruptions.

The fact that visions needed to be authenticated within the public domain made them a resource that could be shared and could be contested. The wide-ranging essays in this volume present a compelling new case for the importance of discernment as a point of contact and a point of dispute between the many different groups of believers that comprised Reformation Europe. Discernment, as a personal pursuit and as a collective one, was inexorably linked to the identification of sanctity, both "real" and "false". For Catholics this stretched far beyond the scope of official canonization process-

[42] Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovsky, "Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–48, here 19. As Moshe Sluhovsky has shown elsewhere, even the discernment of demonic possession could be of positive value for the person possessed and the exorcists guiding her. To be deemed worthy of attack constituted a mark of holiness. See Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 233–64. But the same, of course, is equally true for revelations of divine origin.

es as believers also embraced, rejected and reshaped the identities of would-be and existing saints. Protestants too were keen to identify particularly holy people or prophets, even if they were not then treated as miraculous intercessors, and this likewise involved discerning the truth of a person's deeds and motives. Despite differences in terminology and in the belief in what those in heaven could do for those on earth, discernment played an essential role within both Catholic and Protestant attempts at identifying and bolstering holiness.

CHAPTER ONE

ANGELS, DEMONS, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN: SPIRITUAL BEINGS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

EUAN CAMERON

In the pre-modern world, spiritual creatures were widely, if not universally, believed to exist. However, people in the past seem to have felt the same uncertainty and ambiguity in meeting them as would be felt about mysterious apparitions or presences at any time and place. An apparition might be an illusion; it might be a manifestation of a malevolent intelligence; it might be a sign or messenger from God. It might also—as far as one can uncover the assumptions of vernacular beliefs—be a visitation from one of many kinds of intelligent but not human beings, whose existence was presupposed in regional traditions of storytelling and ritual. The impressions formed by the alleged presence of spirits were essentially transient, unstable, and ambiguous. Therefore, even within any one reasonably consistent layer of belief about such creatures, it was necessary to work out by some means or other what each appearance, manifestation, or message might represent. This exercise amounted to "discerning" the true nature of a spirit. Discernment of spirits became, in the religious thought of the Middle Ages, both an ecclesiastical procedure and a personal gift or charism.[1]

However, the belief-systems of the Middle Ages contained multiple interlocking layers of doctrine, with the result that "discerning" spirits acquired a secondary, didactic character. Typically, a pastoral theologian or more educated priest would claim to "discern" that an apparition previously thought to be benign or morally neutral might be, after all, an illusion or snare of the devil. In such circum-

[1] See e.g., Jean Gerson's treatise *De Probatione Spirituum* in *Joannis Gersonii Doctoris Theologi & Cancellarii Parisiensis Opera Omnia*, ed. Ludovicus Ellies du Pin, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (The Hague, 1728), vol. 1, cols. 37–43; also Paschal Boland, *The Concept of Discretio Spirituum in John Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis"* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1959).

stances the act of "discernment" rather resembled cultural control. The Church discerned that a particular kind of creature could not exist in the way in which traditional lore assumed. Therefore stories about it had to be fitted into or assimilated to the theologically approved dualistic structure of angels and demons (and usually, in case of even the least ambiguity, to the latter).[2] This process constituted not so much "discernment" as the obligatory reinterpretation of experiences previously understood according to another set of assumptions. Theologians throughout the Middle Ages, but especially in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, expended much energy on two related tasks. One involved the sorting out of the physical, metaphysical, and ethical properties of spiritual beings or "separated intelligences" on the plane of pure abstraction.[3] The other challenged pastoral theologians to apply their theories to the received and reported phenomena.[4] Those phenomena included not only the beliefs revealed by pastoral investigations in the localities, but also stories, myths, and legends of spiritual creatures and bizarre apparitions, about which literary culture—including high culture—at the end of the Middle Ages offered abundant and confusing documentation.

In the sixteenth century, beliefs about spirits came in for the same intense scrutiny and debate as every other aspect of religion. On the face of it, there was no immediate need for ideas about spiritual creatures to undergo any great transformation in the wake of the Reformation. By and large, until the mid-seventeenth century the prevailing assumptions about the metaphysics of invisible spiritual beings remained the same as they had been for several centuries. However, in important ways the Reformation inflicted what one might term collateral damage on beliefs about the spirit realm. A fuller idea of God's providential control over every aspect of existence reduced the need for, or explanatory usefulness of, quasi-autonomous spiritual intelligences. A more economical attitude

[2] See note 39 below for the rhetoric of Alphonsus de Spina to this effect.

[3] As was done by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* I q. 44 and following; also in his *Summa contra gentiles* 2:46–50, and his *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis* passim.

[4] On this genre of late medieval literature, see Michael D. Bailey, "Concern over Superstition in Late Medieval Europe," in *The Religion of Fools? Superstition Past and Present*, ed. S. A. Smith and Alan Knight, Past and Present Supplement 3 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 115–33.

towards the traditions of the Church encouraged a sceptical approach to the medieval "fables" on which the lore of spirits had rested (even though that did not prevent some Protestants from forming their own lore, according to their own rules). Reformed theologians argued that some of the alleged manifestations of the supernatural in the everyday world, on which Catholic claims to authenticate (for instance) the cult of saints or suffrages for the dead had depended, simply did not occur in the present age and could not be expected. The narrowing and refining character of such "discernment" grew sharper, as ghosts now were reinterpreted as demons.[5] Finally, the methods traditionally recommended by the Church to guard oneself against hostile spirit activity came to be dismissed by the reformers as "false miracles." Miracles had ceased, and Catholic claims to perform them routinely amounted only to another instance of demonic seduction.[6]

Considering the impact of the reformers' theological doubts on beliefs about spiritual creatures, it is easy to see why earlier generations of theological historians saw this subtle narrowing of the scope of supernatural activity in the world as a harbinger of a "disenchanted" world, one where all forms of causation other than the physical and psychological were excluded.[7] It has long been clear, however, that a simple portrayal of the Reformation as a force for modernity or even secularism cannot and should not be sustained. On the one hand, rational metaphysics was not new: medieval philosophers had been arguing for just such a reduction and simplification of causality for centuries. Matter acted upon matter, and intelligible symbols communicated with intellective entities.[8] On the other, the theology of the Reformation certainly did not ex-

[5] See below, notes 102–5.

[6] For the Reformed doctrine that miracles had ceased, see Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 206–8.

[7] The classic statement of this argument is found in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribners, Allen & Unwin, 1930), 105; see also ibid., 117, 149.

[8] One of the most explicit statements to this effect appears in a short treatise by Thomas Aquinas entitled *De operationibus occultis naturae ad quendam militem ultramontanum*, http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/opo.html (University of Navarre).

clude direct interventions of the sacred in the world, even if it might restrict the ways in which they happened.[9]

Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century a significant number of people certainly *claimed* that new modes of thinking about metaphysics and the operations of the cosmos were endangering the whole notion of an "invisible world." Not all of these sceptical ideas derived from the Reformation; or if they did, it was largely by extrapolation from the ideas of its more radical fringe. Scepticism about the nature and properties of spirits derived more from the metaphysical free-for-all into which western European philosophy descended in the seventeenth century, as the precarious dominance of post-Aristotelian Thomism crumbled. In place of the traditional metaphysics there emerged a rich diversity of possible approaches. Neoplatonism offered new possibilities for relating spiritual beings to the material world. Some bold materialists argued that all that existed had material substance, and that "incorporeal being" was an oxymoron.[10] Boldest of all were those who argued from a standpoint of pure empiricism.[11] Convinced that the theories should be shaped around the facts rather than vice versa, they reversed the epistemologies of the Middle Ages with their reverence for tradition and authority. Paradoxically perhaps, the rise of empiricism would provoke more energetic pursuit of tales of the exotic or extraordinary than any movement of thought before it. Many of the empiricists of the seventeenth century were not disinterested investigators. They sought far and wide for evidence which might definitively prove the existence of the spirit world, denouncing the scepticism and alleged atheism of their opponents.

This chapter will trace the outlines of these developments. By exploring some of the serious and often learned interventions over the natures of spirits, it will try to suggest some kind of trajectory for the unfolding of beliefs on the subject over some five centuries. The purpose here is not to re-form some narrative of progressive modernization. On the contrary, there is evidence that beliefs about spiritual beings in the west have remained chaotic and multifarious since the end of the seventeenth century. However, something im-

[9] See Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 174–91.

[10] See e.g., chapter 34 of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1968), 428–29: discussed below at note 111.

[11] See below, notes 117–18.

portant did happen between the late Middle Ages and the end of the "early modern." Something caused the shift from the characteristic late medieval struggle to establish religious restraint over people's beliefs about the spirit world, into the epistemological disorder and *laissez-faire* which has been evident for the last three centuries. This sketch will attempt to suggest how that transition came about.

1. *Glimpses through the Veil*

The first major challenge of this subject consists in trying to work out what kinds of spiritual creatures were believed to exist in pre-modern Europe. Any portrait which can be drawn is to some extent a construct of the literary imagination. One snatches at those elements in the sources which appear to depend least heavily on the scholastic analysis. Some hints about majority beliefs in spirits may be located in the lore which scholastic pastoral theologians criticised in others, or claimed to have discovered while on visitations. They appear in imaginative literature, especially lyric poetry. They also occur in sermons, where preachers made a didactic or moralising point about encounters with spirit-creatures. Occasionally educated writers reminisced about them from their childhood memories.[12] Even more rarely, some thinkers who obstinately strayed from the approved path offered reasoned intellectual defences of unorthodox spirit-belief.[13] From such sources one may construct an image of pre-modern traditional beliefs about spirits. Ideally such an account should be highly specific geographically, culturally, and linguistically: each culture had its own name, often euphemistic, for its invisible spirits. In practice there is not nearly enough space available here. Moreover, the evidence from a sufficiently early period is too elusive to reveal more than the broadest synthetic outline. For the time being, those spiritual creatures endorsed by theological orthodoxy—angels and demons—will be set

[12] See e.g., Johann Weyer's childhood memories of spirits pretending to move sacks of hops, in Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance*, ed. George Mora and Benjamin Kohl, trans. John Shea (1991; repr. Binghamton, N.Y: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), 72.

[13] Especially Theophrastus Paracelsus: see his *De nymphis, sylvis, Pygmaeis, salamandris et caeteris spiritibus*, in [Theophrastus Paracelsus], *Aur. Philip. Theoph. Paracelsi Bombast ab Hohenheim [. . .] Opera Omnia*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1658), 2:388–98.

aside for later discussion. There is every reason to suppose that the good and evil spirits of received religion formed a consistent part of widely shared beliefs. Where the beliefs of the theologically literate and the majority differed was that the theologians *only* believed in the existence of angels and demons. The greater part of Europe's population appear to have extended their notions of spiritual creatures more broadly.

First, there is abundant evidence that pre-modern people believed in the existence of a great variety of non-human creatures, usually invisible but sometimes seen. Typically these creatures were either associated with a particular environment (woods, waters, mines, and the like) where they might encounter human beings who intruded into their realm.[14] Alternatively they were associated in some way with domestic service: they might appear in people's houses and kitchens to offer help (or reward good housekeeping or punish its opposite);[15] they might also require the services of ordinary human beings as servants in their own realm.[16] A subset of spirit-beings was associated with sexual encounters with human beings. These ranged from the seductive charms of the inhabitants of the *Venusberg*, later made famous in Wagner's *Tannhaüser*, to the violent nocturnal sexual assaults of incubi and succubi. Since the age of Romanticism, of course, this cohort of spirit beings has gained an even stronger position in imaginative literature than it already had in the Renaissance. Because "fairies" of all sorts have become staple fodder for reconstructed folk-tales and sentimental art, that need not discourage the historian from taking the earlier, more fugitive beliefs in such creatures seriously.

Another category of spirit creatures appeared to be entirely malevolent and threatening. It is an interesting question whether many of the creatures designated by the words rendered as "witch" in English were in fact traditionally regarded as human. Early mod-

[14] Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, 71–78; Paracelsus, as above.

[15] See the story of Hudeckin in Johannes Trithemius, *Joannis Trithemii [. . .] Annalium Hirsaugiensium*, 2 vols. (St Gallen, 1690), 1:395–97; also Martin Luther's reference to "domestic demons [called] *Vichtelen*, others *Helekeppelin*," in Martin Luther, *Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi predicata populo* (Wittenberg, 1518), sigs. B2v-B3r.

[16] Fairies who requisitioned the services of human beings in their own "households" feature in some stories from Scottish witchcraft trials currently being researched by Diane Purkiss.

ern people were, of course, taught to, and to a considerable extent did, recognize "witches" in those very real physical human beings around them allegedly endowed with supernatural power.[17] However, some of the earliest, non-forensic descriptions of the *bruja* or the *strix* (whence the Italian *strega*) rather suggest something more alien than an ill-intentioned neighbour. The creatures which the *benandanti* of Friuli battled in their night-flight experiences were almost certainly spiritual.[18] On the margins of the non-human creatures of traditional European belief were the vampires of Eastern Europe and the werewolves of the Germanic world.[19] Again, the omnipresence of such creatures in modern fiction should not drive the historian away from attending to the slender but significant evidence that these beliefs were current in some form or another in early modern Europe.

Two final categories of spirits need to be remembered. Evil spirits could enter into people and cause the mental affliction known as "possession." In theology, possession was supposed to be documented by a series of increasingly stringent criteria: a clear conceptual difference existed between distress or "frenzy" and demonic possession.[20] Typically, possession would be diagnosed when the allegedly possessed person demonstrated abnormal abilities, such as exceptional strength or sudden mastery of previously unknown languages, which could not have been expected from the

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[17] See esp. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (London: Harper Collins, 2002); and *The Witches of Lorraine* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

[18] See Carlo Ginzburg, *I benandanti: ricerche sulla stregoneria e sui culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966); in English, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (London: Routledge, 2011).

[19] On werewolf beliefs, see Johannes Geiler von Kaisersberg, *Die Emeis, dis ist das Büch von der Omeissen* (Strasbourg, 1517), ch. 21, fols. 41v–42v; on vampires, see Gábor Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990).

[20] For example, the ninth canon of the Lambeth Council of 1281, drafted under Archbishop John Pecham, recommended that extreme unction could be given to those suffering from "frenzy" and could even bring them a period of lucidity. See *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents relating to the English Church, II: AD 1205–1313*, ed. F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 2:900ff; also [William Lyndwood], *Lyndwood's Provinciale: The Text of the Canons therein contained, reprinted from the Translation made in 1534*, ed. J. V. Bullard and H. Chalmer Bell (London: The Faith Press, 1929), part 1, sec. 1, para. 1.

same individual in his or her normal mental state. However, one can reasonably doubt whether these stringent criteria would always be applied by the less educated.[21] Possession by a spirit was a real and frightening possibility. Finally, there were apparitions of the spirits of the dead. A spirit or ghost (the two terms are of course cognate) was simply the conscious, intellective part of a human being separated from its bodily vessel. Few pre-modern people would have had any difficulty with the concept of a person existing outside the confines of the body. The question was rather under what circumstances and by what rules the spirits of the dead might become present, and indeed visible, to the living.[22]

Traditional lore attributed to spirits characteristics, even personalities, quite different from those assigned them by learned demonologists. First of all, these spirits were ethically ambivalent. They might help or hinder people; they could cause harm but were not uniformly or consistently wicked. In short, they shared the same potentiality for good and evil as their human counterparts. Unlike humans, spirits were generally supposed to be immortal; however, they were not consistently visible or invisible in the realm of story and exempla, sometimes appearing as both. That intermittent visibility conferred on them a transient, temporary character at odds with their supposed immunity from death.[23] They were often deceptive and mischievous; they mocked people by pretending to do household chores or human work and making all the appropriate sounds, while actually doing nothing whatever.[24] Above all,

[21] On medieval theories of possession, see Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2003), and on popular concepts of demonic possession, see esp. 49ff. For early modern possession, see D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

[22] On early modern ghosts, see Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011).

[23] Paracelsus believed that those whom he called "non-Adamic" creatures were in fact mortal. See [Paracelus], *De nymphis, sylvis*, 2:388ff.; for translation see [Theophrastus Paracelsus], *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim, called Paracelsus*, ed. Henry E. Sigerist, trans. C. Lilian Temkin, George Rosen, Gregory Zilboorg, and Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 226–29.

[24] For instance, Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, 72ff., says that household spirits and gnomes in mines appear to be active but do nothing; William Tyndale, in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, mocked the pretensions of the pope to relieve souls in

spirits were understood to be passionate. They felt insults; they were sensitive to betrayal by their human associates; they were capable of taking the most exquisite, and often delayed or occult, forms of revenge.

"Hudeckin," a spirit described in a twelfth-century tale related by Trithemius of Sponheim (1452–1516), worked quite amicably in the kitchens of the bishop of Hildesheim until first a kitchen-boy and then one of the cooks insulted him: he then took a gruesome revenge on them both, but not without threatening the humans in advance to warn them to treat him better.[25] In a fourteenth-century old German epic poem, the knight Peter von Stauffenberg died a sudden and unexplained death after abandoning his water-nymph wife or mistress in order to take a human bride. This story was alluded to in a work of Paracelsus, as something which would have been recognized by readers.[26] The Protestant poet and pamphleteer Johann Fischart (ca. 1548–1590) edited and popularised the poem in two editions, both published in 1588.[27] The story would later find its way into Arnim and Brentano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn.*[28] In France there circulated the best known version of the tale of Mélusine, often associated with the de Lusignan counts of Poitou. The gist of the story, though told in a range of variants, was that a nobleman married a beautiful mysterious wife, who accepted him on the condition that he did not attempt to see her when she bathed secretly at certain intervals. When (of course) he contrived to see her on one of these occasions, he saw that she had the lower quarters of a serpent or a fish: she then disappeared with a terrible curse [Figure 1.1]. A

purgatory by saying "the pope is kynne to Robin good fellow which swepeth the house, washeth the dishes and purgeth all by night. But when day commeth there is nothyng found cleane." See *The VVhole Workes of W. Tyndall, Iohn Frith, and Doct. Barnes* (n.p., 1573; STC 2nd ed. 24436), 174.

[25] Trithemius, *Joannis Trithemii [. . .] annalium*, 1:395–96.

[26] Paracelsus, *Opera omnia*, 2:395–96.

[27] Johann Fischart, ed., *Ernewerte Beschreibung der wolgedenckwirdigen Alten und warhafften wunderlichen Geschicht Vom Herren Petern von Stauffenberg, genant Diemringer aus der Ortenaw bey Rhein, Rittern: Was wunders ihme mit einer Meervein oder Meerfähe seye gegegnet. Darzu ein außführlicher Bericht und Vorred* (Magdeburg, 1588); another edition was also published in Strasbourg in 1588.

[28] Ludwig Achim, Freiherr von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, eds., *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1876), 1:374–82.

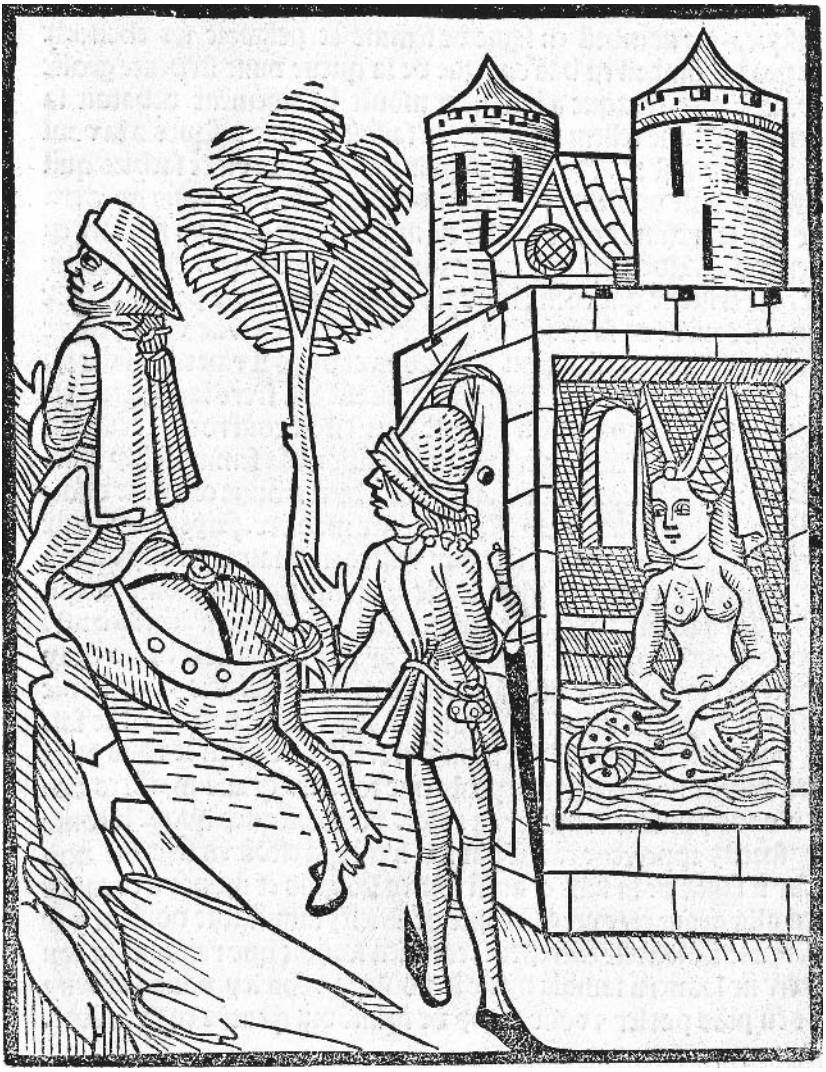

Figure 1.1 Jean d'Arras. *L'Histoire de Melusine* (Lyon, ca. 1480). Reproduced with permission from Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books, Switzerland.

literary version of the story was attributed to a Jean d'Arras under the titles *Roman de Mélusine* or *Chronique de Melusine*. It was rapidly printed in the early decades of the press and many times subsequently.[29] In each case these stories made a range of moral or exemplary points. One of the most interesting was the implication that human beings must keep their promises even when made to spirit-creatures; since non-human creatures could not win redress for broken faith in human society, they were in some sense justified in taking supernatural revenge.[30]

2. *Striving for Coherence: The Scholastic Analysis of Spirits*

Given the proliferation of literary versions of and references to the romantic and often moralising tales of human-spirit interactions in the early age of printing, it is hard to imagine that this genre of literature had been labouring under theological censure. Yet, in a sense, that was what had been happening right through the Middle Ages. Especially since the rise of Christian Aristotelianism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, theologians had argued that strict limits were set, not only by theology but also by philosophy and reason, on the nature, properties, potentialities, and behaviour of spiritual creatures. In the later Middle Ages, a significant body of applied scholastic pastoral theology, expressed in catechisms, sermons, and other kinds of manuals, sought to regulate exactly what was or was not possible in the invisible realm. Scholastic demonology did not, any more than its successors, represent the triumph of tradition over reason. In fact, it sifted and strained its material, of-

[29] See for instance Jean d'Arras, *L'histoire de la belle Mélusine* (Geneva, 1478); *Melusine: A Tale of the Serpent Fairy* (s.l., 1510; STC 2nd ed. 14648). The surviving copy of the latter is a four-leaf fragment. An array of these tales is summarised in http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/melusina.html#france. On the tales of Melusine, see Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, eds., *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) and Claudia Steinkämper, *Melusine - vom Schlangenweib zur "Beauté mit dem Fischschwanz": Geschichte einer literarischen Aneignung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). Luther alluded to the story of "Melusina" in *Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883–1948) [henceforth, *WA*] *Tischreden* no. 3676, 3:516–17, in the context of the story of the nobleman remarrying a ghost-wife or demon-wife. On Luther's reference to the legend, see Steinkämper, *Melusine*, 135ff.

[30] Paracelsus, *Opera omnia*, 2:396.

ten reinterpreting stories from the past to make them accord with the emergent theory.

Spiritual beings acquired a distinct metaphysical category as "separated intelligences." That is to say, they represented the intellective and volitional embodiment of consciousness. Since (as Aquinas argued in the *Summa contra gentiles*) we knew that intelligences could exist independently of bodies (in the form of human souls) it followed that separated intelligences could exist without ever having been linked to bodies as their form.[31] Such intelligences were understood, in post-Thomist metaphysics, to be entirely incorporeal: they had no bodily substance whatever. Some unexpected consequences followed from the incorporeality of spirits. Without bodies, they could not possess physical senses or animal passions. Wholly spiritual beings could not be subject to the attractions of the flesh, so could not commit sins which came from corporeal appetites (neither, one might add, could they be virtuous through abstinence from such appetites). Without organs of sense, they could not learn by the assimilation of sense-impressions and the building up of an image, but by pure intellection. Finally, each was a separate species, since without bodies they could not consist of matter and form, differentiated by their divergence from the "form" as material creatures were.[32] In short, the whole mode of existence for purely spiritual creatures was entirely "other" and distinct from that of corporeal entities.

Theologians and metaphysicians, by establishing a clear place for spiritual beings in the created order, imposed restrictions on their *actual* power, though not on their power to generate illusions. In reality, all angels, whether loyal or fallen, good or bad, were rigorously limited in their capacities by their status as creatures of God and thus part of the natural order. They existed within time, and could not know those things which belonged to the eternal wisdom of God. They could not know the future unless God chose to reveal it to them; at most they might conjecture future events from visible signs. They could not know the secrets of the human heart, except in the normal way of gauging someone's state of mind by outward

[31] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 2:91. Compare also Thomas's *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis* art. 5.

[32] This summary is drawn from the sources cited in Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 93–94.

indicators. They could not truly transform one material thing into another, except by the mixture of existing elements. Spiritual creatures could not perform genuine miracles, except as agents of specific divine commands. Fallen angels could at most perform "marvels": these operated entirely within the natural order, but relied on speed and great knowledge to bewilder those who witnessed them. However, spirits were all enormously long-lived, intelligent, fast-moving, and experienced. By their knowledge of the world the fallen angels could represent themselves as knowing far more than they actually did. By rearranging subtle matter before the organs of human senses, or by interfering with the physical processes of cognition in the brain, they could generate illusions.[33] Consequently, nothing presented to the organs of sense by a spirit-creature could be entirely trustworthy.[34]

Not only were pure spirits ontologically quite different from human beings of body and soul; they were also ethically quite different. Theologians following John of Damascus argued that from the moment in cosmic history, splendidly unclear in Scripture, when some of the angels rebelled against God, their ethical destinies were sealed forever. Their choice to fall or not to fall was as irreversible as the fact of death for a human being.[35] Afterwards, the good angels who had not rebelled were confirmed in their goodness, such that they had perfect free will but were incapable of sinning: their natures ensured that they would always choose to do good. The evil angels were forever deprived of the ability to wish for anything other than evil and were irretrievably damned. In antiquity, Origen had speculated that ultimately, eventually, God would draw all rational creatures to the divine essence and that all could be re-

[33] Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), in his exposition of Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* bk. 2, dist. 8, q. 2, explained demonic illusions by (i) the manipulation of matter to create illusory objects (ii) interference with the humours of sense, and (iii) by the rearranging of objects in the human memory. See Martin Plantsch, *Opusculum de sagis maleficis* (Pforzheim, 1507), sigs. c4r–5r. Compare Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super sententiis*, on the same passage as above.

[34] See Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), esp. 123–53.

[35] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I q. 64, art. 2, and more extensively his *De malo* q. 16, art. 5; based on John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* bk. ii, ch. 4.

deemed.[36] However, by the Middle Ages the idea that any demons could be redeemed or saved constituted the dangerous (and largely mythical) heresy sometimes known as "Luciferanism."[37] For the theologians who wrote works of pastoral advice for the instruction of the laity, this binary ethical division of the invisible spirits meant that *all* such creatures were either angelic or demonic. No room remained for ethical ambivalence or complexity. Especially, nothing good could possibly be expected from fallen angels.

Scholastic metaphysics thus found itself on a collision course with traditional beliefs about spirits and the work which they could do. Whereas traditional narratives had envisaged people bargaining with spirits for real benefits, theology now insisted that any benefits supposedly obtained from demonic beings must be unreliable, illusory, or treacherous, designed only to lure souls further into illicit practices to their own destruction. By a complex train of argument (which I have analysed elsewhere) theologians reasoned that all "superstitious" rituals designed to achieve some physical benefit—even when that benefit appeared universally benign—must rest on a tacit appeal to those evil spirits who were, by the principles described above, dedicated to the destruction of human souls.[38] Therefore, by obscure logic which surely stretched the credulity of all but the most devout, even the most minimal or accidental involvement in quasi-magical practices savoured of traffic with the spiritual forces of pure evil. Thus the theologians of the Middle Ages "discerned" that the whole array of putatively beneficent or at least harmless spiritual beings, including fairies, domestic house-spirits, and alluring nymphs, were in fact destructive demons.[39] Not only that: these demons were capable only of the intellectual sin of pride, so could not fall prey to any of the other passions which traditional tales attributed to them. Their apparent passions of love and jealousy could only be illusions, part of the broader conspiracy to

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[36] See Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 38–44.

[37] For alleged medieval "Luciferans," see Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 99–100.

[38] On the medieval scholastic notion of "implicit pact," see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 106–10.

[39] See esp. Alphonsus de Spina, *Fortalitium Fidei* (Lyon, 1487), bk. 5, consideration 10, sigs. Lr–L3v. Spina there enumerates a variety of folk-spirits and concludes that all are really demons.

beguile and deceive humanity. In this binary, quasi-Manichaean world the task of discerning spirits became intellectually simpler but pastorally more demanding. Could a pastor really persuade his people that all commerce with spirit-creatures was in truth supping with the devil? Certainly there was no shortage of stories, such as the tale of St Germanus of Auxerre and the villagers leaving food out for "Habundia" and her followers, to support the allegation.[40] Occasionally pastoral writers warned clergy against too vigorous a critique of popular belief, implying that people reproved too sternly for their traditional lore and assumptions would simply disconnect entirely from their preachers' homilies.[41] It is impossible to tell what impact this demonological discourse of spirits may have had on the general population. It was certainly available to the people, set out in sermon-cycles and catechetical treatises.[42] However, even amongst the clergy few will have adopted it wholesale.

3. *The Reformation and the World of Spirits*

The ideas of the Reformation impacted the world of spirits indirectly rather than by direct confrontation. The evil which most preoccupied the reformers was religion gone wrong, what they saw to be a deeply misconceived way of leading the Christian life and of organising Christian society. Beliefs about spirits sat somewhere off at the periphery of the first reformers' fields of vision. Moreover, many Reformed theologians, insofar as they were philosophers, held similar opinions about the nature of the world and of being to their

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[40] The tale of St Germanus is cited and re-cited, e.g., in Johannes Nider, *Johannis Nideri theologi olim clarissimi de visionibus ac revelationibus: Opus rarissimum historiis Germaniæ refertissimum, anno 1517, Argentinæ editum* (Helmstedt, 1692), 201ff.; Geiler von Kaisersberg, *Die Emeis*, chapter 17, fols. 35ff.; Jacob of Jueterbogk (also known as Jacobus de Clusa), "De potestate daemonum, arte magica, superstitionibus et illusionibus eorundem," MS. 4600 Bd. Ms. 4, fol. 205r, Cornell University Archives, Ithaca, NY; Plantsch, *Opusculum de sagis maleficis*, sigs. c2r–3v.

[41] On the pastoral impact and the risks of too vigorous a critique of supersitious belief, see e.g., Jean Gerson, *De directione cordis*, in his *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris and New York: Desclée, 1960–), vol. 8 (1971), sections 37–38, 108–9; Felix Malleolus or Hemmerli, *Tractatus I de exorcismis*, in *Malleus Maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1600), 2:387, 392.

[42] Two (related) examples of demonological lectures presented as sermon-cycles are Geiler von Kaisersberg, *Die Emeis*, and Plantsch, *Opusculum de sagis maleficis*.

Catholic adversaries. Despite denunciations of "the blind, heathen teacher Aristotle"[43] or of "the monstrous theology which has Aristotle as its head and Christ as its feet"[44] or his calling Aristotle "the destroyer of godly doctrine,"[45] even Luther had time for traditional philosophy, so long as it was not asked to explain how human beings might be enabled to act in a righteous or godly way. Aristotle was all right in his proper place. Philipp Melanchthon devoted a large part of his prolific academic output to dressing Aristotle up in a new garb more suited to the schools of Lutheran universities.[46] In terms of metaphysics—which included the ontology of spirits—the reformers had no real quarrel with the scholastics, at least not at first.

However, other aspects of their thought were destined to have an impact in this area. First, the mainstream reformers argued for a new relationship between human ritual and divine action. In the world of the Reformation, divine power was never delegated; God always acted directly and without intermediaries, so ritual did not embody or contain divine power. Nevertheless God was faithful, and for that reason sacraments were trustworthy. Secondly, most reformers were providentialists. They tended to argue that even the most infinitesimal details of human experience were overseen by a caring but often inscrutable God. There was less room, therefore, to ascribe independent agency to invisible spirits except as the tools and messengers of the Almighty. While the reformers might still use the language of divine "permission" given to evil spirits, by this language they meant that, in the final analysis, every last thing that angels did, good or bad, was ordained by God to some ultimately righteous purpose.

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[43] *WA*, 6:457; trans. in Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* ed. J.J. Pelikan, H.C. Oswald, and H.T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia and St Louis: Fortress Press, 1955–86) [henceforth, *LW*], 44:200.

[44] *WA,* 2:562; *LW* 27:328, on Galatians 5:2.

[45] *WA*, 8:127; *LW* 32:258.

[46] See esp. Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).

4. *Angels in the Reformation*

The first generation of reformers believed in angels, good and bad. However, they simplified and in some respects modified medieval traditions on this topic. In this area as elsewhere, they purged away many non- or post-Scriptural encrustations of medieval culture. Relatively few reformers actually took the time and trouble to construct a systematic angelology. Luther, typically, scattered remarks on the subject prolifically throughout his oeuvre, but did not form a consistent or coherent picture.[47] Calvin devoted most of Book 1, Chapter 14 of the final edition of the *Institutes* (1559) to a relatively spare and stripped-down theory of angels and made scattered remarks elsewhere.[48] Heinrich Bullinger of Zurich dedicated an extended sermon (some 14,000 words) in the fourth series of his *Decades* (1567) to the subject of angels and demons.[49] For a more fully articulated angelology, however, one has to turn to the Italian Reformed émigré Girolamo Zanchi (1516–90), who included an extended systematic discussion of angels in the first part his *De operibus Dei intra spacium sex dierum creatis* (On the Works of God created within Six Days), published at Neustadt-an-der-Haardt in 1591 shortly after his death [Figure 1.2].[50] Alone of the authors reviewed here, Zanchi took the time and trouble to isolate disputed questions and to gather together a formidable list of testimonies on each issue, which he explored in neo-scholastic fashion. Without the space to review each of these (and other) treatments in turn, a few general observations will be made here.

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[47] See Philip M. Soergel, "Luther on the Angels," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 64–82.

[48] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I.xiv.3–19. See also Marshall and Walsham, introduction to *Angels in the Early Modern World*, 14–15.

[49] Heinrich Bullinger, *Sermonum decades quinque, de potissimis Christianae religionis capitibus* (Zurich, 1567), fols. 248r–65v; translated as *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons: Diuided into Fiue Decades* (London, 1577), 731–54.

[50] Girolamo Zanchi, *De operibus Dei intra spacium sex dierum creatis* (Neustadt, 1591). The work is here cited in the edition in Hieronymus Zanchius, *Opera theologica*, 8 vols. (Geneva, 1613). The discussion of angels and demons occupies vol. 3, cols. 57–216, part 1, bks. 2–4. On Zanchi, see Christopher J. Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and his Work," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no.2 (1984): 1–26.

Hond. fecit.
Turris Fortissi. nom. Dñi.
Sustine abstine
HIERONYMVS ZANCHIVS, BERGAM.
Ingenio præstans, nulli pietate secundus
Zanchius, hoc vultu conspiciendus erat:
Scripta probata viris sanctissima plurima doctis,
Interiora animi maxima dona ferunt. Cum privilegio.

Figure 1.2. Girolamo Zanchi in Jacob Verheiden, *Praestantium aliquot theologorum, qui Rom. antichristum praecipue oppugnarunt, effigies* (The Hague, 1602). Reproduced with permission from Balliol College, Oxford.

First, the reformers argued that angels existed as real substances, and not merely as metaphors for the dispositions of the will of God or of the human mind. Calvin, Bullinger, and Zanchi were all aware of the argument that angels might be read simply as metaphors for psychological states or for the abstract influence of God; all rejected the suggestion as unscriptural. As Bullinger put it, some people "imagine that angels are nothing else than qualities, motions, or inspirations of good mynds. But the canonical scripture calleth them ministers."[51] For Calvin, all that could be known about the angels was found in Scripture; and all the questions that should be asked concerning them were those which tended to edification and the instilling of Christian behaviour. Consequently, the reformers by and large dispensed with and disapproved of the intricate theories found in Pseudo-Dionysius's Περὶ τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας (On the Celestial Hierarchy) about the names and organization of the nine orders of angels.[52] Calvin dismissed the *Celestial Hierarchy* as "idle talk" adding sarcastically that "you would think that the man had come down from heaven, and was relating, not what he had learned, but what he had actually seen."[53] Zanchi expanded on this only to the extent of showing that Pseudo-Dionysius could not be the Dionysius mentioned in the New Testament, nor others of the same name mentioned in the early Fathers, but must have been someone "more recent and more obscure."[54]

As a general rule the reformers would not endorse anything less than was set down in Scripture, but they hesitated to speculate beyond it either. So, they agreed that the angels were substantial beings, and that some of them had fallen and become evil while others remained loyal.[55] However, as to when they were created and when some of them fell from grace and were expelled from heaven, there was no certainty in Scripture. Bullinger added, "that which is not deliuered in the scriptures, can not without daunger be inquired

[51] Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, 733; cf. Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.9; I.xiv.19.

[52] The text of Dionysius's works is edited in Greek and Latin in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca, vol. 3 (Paris: Migne, 1857–66), cols. 119–370 for the *Celestial Hierarchy*.

[53] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.4; cf. ibid., I.xiv.8.

[54] Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I. 2. 14, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 91–96. "Fuit igitur aliquis alius Dionysius, recentior et obscurior."

[55] Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, 745.

after, but without daunger we may be ignoraunt thereof."[56] "To stir up questions concerning the time or order in which they were created bespeaks more perverseness than industry," Calvin remarked.[57] That same economy and modesty left the reformers unclear as to what kind of substances the angels were composed of. Here the leading Protestant theologians began to show a little disarray. The traditional scholastic view held angels to be entirely incorporeal, and Calvin agreed that "it is certain that spirits have no bodily shape."[58] However, Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) included a long, abstract and diffuse discussion of the natures of spirits, whether corporeal or otherwise, in his commentaries on Samuel: eventually he decided that they were indeed incorporeal.[59] Bullinger speculated whether angels might be in some sense corporeal, citing a passage once attributed to Augustine, and so quoted by Bonaventure, to the effect that only God was truly, utterly incorporeal in nature.[60] However, he ended by dismissing such speculations as unhelpful.[61] The neo-scholastic Zanchi went further. He suggested that it was preferable to think that angels had rarefied bodies, as the Fathers had surmised, at least by comparison with the nature of God. However, it was permissible to think the opposite, and only God truly knew their substance, as John of Damascus had said.[62]

Were "guardian angels" assigned to each individual person? The reformers showed more interest in this question than might have been expected. In the mid-1520s Luther wrote with some enthusiasm about angels intervening to protect the faithful and to guide them away from danger, though whether he envisaged an individu-

[56] Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, 733; compare Luther in *WA*, 42:17–18; *LW*, 1:22–23; commentary on Genesis 1:6; also *WA*, 42:85; *LW*, 1:111–12, commentary on Genesis 2:17.

[57] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.4; cf. Peter Lombard, *Book of Sentences*, bk. 2, dist. 2ff.

[58] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.8.

[59] Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In duos libros Samuelis prophetae [. . .] commentarii doctissimi*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1567), fols. 162v–64v.

[60] The original quotation alluded to here comes in fact from the late fifth-century theologian Gennadius of Marseille, *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus*, ch. 11, as edited in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 58, col. 984. The text cited is attributed to Augustine in Bonaventure's *Commentarii in quatuor libros sententiarum* bk. 1, dist. 3, pt. 1, q. 2; also in bk. 1, dist. 37, pt. 1, art. 2.

[61] Bullinger, *Sermonum decades quinque,* fol. 249r.

[62] Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I.2.3, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 66–70.

al guardian for each person was uncertain.[63] Kaspar Peucer (1525–1602), in his *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (Commentary on the Principal Types of Divinations), likened the belief in a good and evil angel attending each person to the classical pagan belief in "genii" or tutelary spirits.[64] Calvin explored the Scriptural evidence for this theory, concluding sceptically that one need not try to achieve certainty on the subject, since one person might be defended by many angels and assaulted by many demons. Ultimately, God's providential care over every individual was absolute: the use of angels as intermediaries served only to assure us of the infinite nature of God's resources and the scope of divine love.[65] Yet again, Zanchi explored the issue in unusual detail. He found it useful and Scriptural to reflect on the role of angels as guardians; it was "probable and consonant with Scripture" that each elect person was assigned a tutelary spirit, though others might be added for extra help when needed. In any case, the angels could never disagree over humans in their care nor abandon their protection.[66] In general, the reformers were far more interested in the overall ministry of good angels. They saw that ministry in traditional terms: good angels were to look after and care for human beings, while acting as the instruments of divine grace. As for the evil angels, Calvin, in keeping with his providentialism, argued that while acting out the scope of their malice from their own ill-will, the demons would inescapably fulfil the ultimately good purposes of God.[67]

Because their interest focused on ministry—what the angels were "there for"—in general the reformers showed far less interest than the scholastics in speculating on the limits to the angels' power, even as they pointed out that the angels could do nothing against God and were in no sense godlike. Since Scripture required it, it was agreed that angels who were in their own natures invisible could

[63] Soergel, "Luther on the Angels," 72–73.

[64] Kaspar Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (Frankfurt, 1593 and 1607), ch. 6 at 288–89; cf. Kaspar Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis generibus divinationum* (Wittenberg, 1560), fols. 147v–48v.

[65] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.7; John Calvin, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, *Corpus reformatorum*, vols. 29–87 (Braunschweig and Berlin: Schwetschke, 1853–1900) [henceforth, *CO*], vol. 8, cols. 349–50; vol. 45, col. 270 on Mark 5:9.

[66] Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I.3.14–17, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 135–47.

[67] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.16–17; *CO*, vol. 8, cols. 356–60.

take on visible human forms temporarily, when it was necessary to fulfil their duties; but no-one could be entirely sure how they did that.[68] Without bodily form as they naturally were, it followed that they could only experience joy (as the Bible described) in a celestial way not quite analogous to human emotions.[69] However, only in Zanchi does one encounter any systematic address to traditional questions about the knowledge and abilities of angels and demons: how much they knew, whether they could be in error, whether they knew the secrets of the heart, whether they knew the future (no in each case), or whether they could perform miracles (not really). Zanchi was one of few reformers to speculate openly on whether demons could have sexual relations with human beings and cause children to be born from such unions. The possibility of such relations he justified from Augustine's remarks on pagan legends; the mechanics of the process he drew from Aquinas.[70] However, in one respect Zanchi diverged radically and critically from his medieval exemplars. Why was it that apparitions of angels used to occur so frequently, and yet they were now extremely rare? Zanchi's response followed very closely the established Protestant rhetoric about the cessation of miracles. In the infancy of the people of God there was need of constant communications from God and reminders of the divine presence and the divine will. After the incarnation and resurrection, and the coming of the Gospel, there was no further need for such things and they were not to be expected:

> In [the time of] the Old Testament they were like children: therefore just as they needed external ceremonies, so they needed outward appearances of angels for their consolation. Now that Christ is incarnate, enthroned in heaven, and the Spirit has been given out far and wide, [God] does not send further [visitations] but wishes our conversation to be in the heavens, not with angels on earth. Moreover, in the beginning of the Church there was need for these celestial confirmations: now the Word of God has been amply confirmed.[71]

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[68] Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, 734; Zanchi, *De operibus Dei,* I.2.8–9, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 77–84.

[69] Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons*, 737–39; Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I.3.13, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 132–35.

[70] Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I.4.16, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, cols. 203–4.

[71] Zanchi, *De operibus Dei*, I.3.20, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 3, col. 159. "In veteri Testamento pueri erant: ideo sicut ceremoniis externis, sic etiam externis apparationibus angelorum egebant ad sui consolationem. Nunc incarnato Christo et

It is interesting that Zanchi took for granted that apparitions of angels were indeed almost non-existent in the sixteenth century. In some Lutheran territories just such angelic apparitions were reported by excited and concerned laypeople, to the consternation of the Lutheran authorities in those areas.[72] Evidently the news did not reach the scholars in Reformed Neustadt.

5. *Protestants, Possession, and Witchcraft*

The Scriptural reverence which informed the reformers' modified and simplified theory of angels also required and reinforced their beliefs in the possibility of demonic possession and of witchcraft. Both these phenomena represented in different ways the assaults of evil spirits: but in the one case the human being was a (largely) innocent victim, in the other the human witch served as the willing but deluded accomplice of the forces of evil. In the case of possession, reformers largely agreed with their medieval forbears on the criteria involved. Philipp Melanchthon, according to Johann Weyer (1515–88), reported several cases of possession where the victim acquired unexpected linguistic and other skills, which disappeared once the victim was healed.[73] However, the Protestant-Catholic rift soon moved the debate over possession into unfamiliar territory. Catholics boasted of their power to exorcise spirits from the possessed by the force of their (impressive) rituals. In several spectacular and notorious instances Catholics claimed to have cured possessed people after the prayers of their Protestant pastors had failed to accomplish the task.[74] Much worse from the Protestant

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sedente in caelis, donato largiter suo spiritu, non mittit amplius, sed vult, ut conversatio nostra in caelis sit: non autem angelorum in terris. Deinde initio Ecclesiae opus erat talibus confirmationibus caelestibus: nunc satis confirmatum est verbum Dei."

[72] Soergel, "Luther on the Angels," 64–65; see also Jürgen Beyer, "A Lübeck Prophet in Local and Lutheran Context," in *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe 1400–1800*, ed. Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 166–82.

[73] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 182–83.

[74] Martin Delrio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex*, 3 vols. (Leuven, 1599–1600), 2:74ff.; 3:261, 284–86; Friedrich Förner, *Panoplia armaturae Dei, adversus omnem superstitionum, divinationum, excantationum, demonolatriam, et universas magorum, veneficorum, et sagarum, et ipsiusmet Sathanae insidias, praestigias et infestationes* (Ingolstadt, 1626), 94–99, 194–95, 268–69; see also Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in his Saints:*

point of view, the supposed spirits sometimes made speeches from the mouths of the possessed people which reinforced the claims of Catholicism. Despite the irony evident in seeking confirmation of one's beliefs from demons, Catholic propagandists on several occasions publicised the greater reverence towards Catholic objects evinced by possessed people, and their dismissive comments on the spiritual credibility of Protestants. Most notoriously and spectacularly, in two cases of possession in France during and just after the Wars of Religion, two young women, Nicole Obry and Marthe Brossier, were presented as possessed by demons. Their "demons" showed reverence for the power of the Catholic mass, and insisted that they already controlled the souls of the Huguenots, whom they despised.[75]

Possession, therefore, while not metaphysically very controversial in the confessional era, became a bitter bone of contention whenever the theory was applied and also whenever the means to treat it were discussed. In traditional theories of exorcism it had been regarded as bad form to seek answers from the demon (except for the demon's name). Yet in the heat of controversy the testimonies of demons on theological points were quoted and even publicised when they happened to support a polemical case. That in turn raised various possibilities for sceptics and Protestants: either the demonic spirit was deliberately misleading human beings so as to involve them more deeply in error; or the alleged possession was simply a fraud on the part of the exorcists; or the "possessed" merely suffered from a mental disorder, misdiagnosed by opportunistic attention-seekers. In post-Reformation England all these possibilities were canvassed. Samuel Harsnett, the conforming Anglican polemical theologian and future archbishop, vigorously denounced both puritan charismatics and Catholic propagandists for their attempts to impress the public by feats of exorcising possessed people.[76] Reformed theologians argued that the only proper re-

Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[75] On these celebrated cases of possession at Laon and Soissons, see Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, 19–42; and Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, chs. 2–3.

[76] See e.g., Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures to Withdraw the Harts of her Maiesties Subiects from Their Allegeance, and from the Truth of Christian Religion professed in England, under the Pretence of Casting Out Devils* (London, 1603).

sponse to possession was to offer petitionary prayer to God to relieve the afflicted person.[77] However, providential theology insisted that such prayer might not be answered. That ought to have made Protestant clergy indifferent to the argument that Catholic exorcisms had a higher success rate, since "success" was in their view not a criterion for faithfulness. However, it is not at all clear that lay-people, or even some clergy, saw things in such an austere way.

As the disputed themes in the spiritual world came to focus upon questions of doctrine, possession by spirits increasingly assumed a theological character. One of the worst ways in which the devils could afflict people, in the eyes of some reformers, was by imbuing them with wrong religious ideas and a perverse obstinacy in defending them. If justification was effective through faith, then filling someone with false faith represented the worst form of "possession." Luther put it thus in *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments* of 1524–25: "It ought to surprise no one that I call him a devil. For I am not thinking of Dr. Karlstadt or concerned about him. I am thinking of him by whom he is possessed and for whom he speaks."[78] In 1535, Luther would repeatedly explain the perversity of the sects by the fact that they had been taken captive by the persuasions of Satan: "this bewitchment is nothing other than a dementing by the devil, who inserts into the heart a false opinion."[79] Luther took perhaps an extreme position in this regard. Maybe only he could have held in tension the idea that wrong theology literally derived from demonic possession: possibly such a line of argument led inevitably towards the very end the reformers did not seek, namely the conversion of the idea of possession into a metaphor for a psychological state.[80]

Two important consequences followed for Protestant thought. First, Reformed theologians embarked on an elaborate and detailed campaign to discredit the rite of exorcising spirits from people as practised in Catholicism. Here the Reformed ("Calvinist") theologians were on the whole more consistent and forthright than their

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[77] For Protestant arguments that prayer was the only proper response to demonic possession or vexation, see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 205–6, 215.

[78] *WA*, 18:139; *LW*, 40:149.

[79] *WA*, 40/1: 318–22; *LW*, 26:194–97, commentary on Galatians 3:1.

[80] Reginald Scot, *Discourse [. . .] of Devils and Spirits*, in his *The Discovery of Witchcraft: [. . .] Whereunto is Added an Excellent Discourse of the Nature and Substance of Devils and Spirits* (London, 1665), chs. 14–18.

Lutheran counterparts, especially towards the end of the sixteenth century.[81] Confessional-era Lutheran ecclesiastics would insist on retaining a modest and suitably purged ritual of exorcism for use in baptism, in keeping with Luther's theology that human bodies in this world remained in the possession of the devil and needed to be prised from his grasp. Hard-line Lutherans such as Tilemann Heshus (1527–88) and Polycarp Leyser (1552–1610) insisted on keeping exorcism in baptism largely because their Reformed opponents in bitterly divided Protestant Germany insisted equally firmly on removing it.[82] Be that as it may, Reformed theologians especially in German-speaking Switzerland subjected the exorcism of evil spirits to historical-critical analysis and ritual ridicule. Bullinger denounced the practices of Catholic exorcists as useless for their purpose and painfully humiliating to the afflicted person.[83] The Bern theologian Benedikt Marti or Aretius (1522–74) produced a sophisticated schema of exorcism in his theological encyclopaedia. There were four true types of exorcism, grounded in Scripture and the early Church. There were also four false varieties, invented by human pride and demonic imitation: the worst of these was "papist" exorcism, where the demon only pretended to be constrained in order to confirm the superstition of those who used it.[84] In this case, and typically of Protestant rhetoric on the subject since Luther, Aretius deployed against exorcism the same argument which had been devised in the Middle Ages against superstitious rites in popular culture. These rites had no power of themselves, but sometimes the demonic spirits who had devised or suggested these rituals pretended to be compelled by them, so that people would continue to

[81] Though Lutherans did not reject the critique of Catholic exorcism altogether: see Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, 4 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1971–1986), 2:689; also Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1593), 321–22.

[82] See for instance Tilemann Heshusius, *De exorcismo in actione baptismi* (Magdeburg, 1562); Polycarp Leyser, *Von Abschaffung des Exorcismi bey der heiligen Tauffe im Fürstenthumb Anhalt* (Gera, 1591).

[83] See Heinrich Bullinger, *Wider die Schwartzen Künst, Aberglaeubigs segnen, unwarhafftigs Warsagen, und andere dergleichen von Gott verbottne Künst*, in *Theatrum de veneficis: Das ist: Von Teufelsgespenst, Zauberern und Gifftbereitern, Schwartzkünstlern, Hexen und Unholden, vieler fürnemmen Historien und Exempel* (Frankfurt, 1586), 301.

[84] Benedictus Aretius, *Problemata theologica continentia præcipuos christianae religionis locos, brevi et dilucida ratione explicatos* (Lausanne, 1578), art. "exorcistae," part 2, fols. 66v–68r.

practise them and thus become more deeply involved in a realm of superstitious customs, and thus be dragged farther into the devil's realm.[85] As the Philippist Lutheran Kaspar Peucer put it, "what is now done by exorcists, is a collusion with the Devil."[86]

Collusion with the devil was, of course, very much still in the minds of Reformed thinkers at this stage. Protestant theologians certainly did not abandon the belief in witchcraft as one of the worst and most seductive ways in which evil spirits sought out and perverted human souls in order to encompass their destruction. Curiously, though, Protestant attitudes to witch-belief in the strict sense manifest utter theological disarray, not only within a particular Reformed movement, but also between different Protestant confessions. No single position can be identified with a particular tradition. Two Reformed theologians, Lambert Daneau (ca. 1530–1595) and Thomas Erastus (1524–1583), both wrote descriptions of the witchcraft phenomenon which conformed fairly closely to the contemporary stereotype of the devil-worshipping sect of witches.[87] A Danish Lutheran, Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600), wrote a treatise on the avoidance of magical superstitions which ended by affirming the possibility of the explicit pact between a sorcerer and Satan.[88]

On the other hand, the Reformed theologian "Augustin Lercheimer" (actually the Heidelberg academic Hermann Wilken or Witekind, 1522–1603) and the Palatine pastor Antonius Praetorius of Laudenbach (1560–1614) both adopted the sceptical views of Johann Weyer in regard to the associations alleged to occur between devils and witches.[89] Johann Weyer, whose confessional position was am-

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[85] For the medieval arguments about the "implicit pact," see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 106–10 as above, note 38.

[86] Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1593), 322.

[87] Lambert Daneau, *Dialogus de veneficis*, in *Flagellum hæreticorum fascinariorum* (Frankfurt, 1581), 184–299; Thomas Erastus, *Repetitio disputationis de lamiis seu strigibus, in qua solide et perspicue, de arte earum, potestate, itemque poena disceptatur* (Basel, 1578).

[88] Niels Hemmingsen, *Admonitio de superstitionibus magicis vitandis, in gratiam sincerae religionis amantium* (Copenhagen, 1575), sigs. B7r–v.

[89] References for "Augustin Lercheimer" (Hermann Wilken or Witekind), *Ein Christlich Bedencken unnd Erinnerung von Zauberey*, in *Theatrum de veneficis: Das ist: Von Teufelsgespenst, Zauberern und Gifftbereitern, Schwartzkünstlern, Hexen und Unholden, vieler fürnemmen Historien und Exempel* (Frankfurt, 1586), 261–98; Antonius Praetorius, *Gründlicher Bericht von Zauberey und Zauberern, deren Urpsrung, Unterscheid, Vermögen und Handlungen, Auch wie einer Christlichen Obrigkeit, solchen schändlichen Laster zu Begegnen* (Frankfurt, 1629).

biguous, was a physician by profession and a firm believer in the existence of evil spirits. However, he regarded most of the means by which witches supposedly interacted with spirits as entirely fictitious, and denied that witches were truly capable of the things of which they were accused.[90] Although the Lutheran Johann Georg Godelmann (1559–1611) rejected much of the scepticism expressed by Weyer and his Reformed followers, his procedural rigour and suspicion of the more exotic tales told of witches tended to edge him more towards the sceptical end of the spectrum.[91]

The topic of where Protestant witchcraft theory stood on the spectrum of credulous versus sceptical has become somewhat well-worn.[92] More interesting and enlightening is the strong biblical and linguistic element which suffused Reformed writing on the subject. This biblicist-philological emphasis threatened at times entirely to deconstruct "witchcraft" as a single concept. Calvin made preliminary reference to some of the Hebrew names for magicians in his *Treatise on Relics* of 1549, as did Kaspar Peucer in the first edition of his work *On Divinations*.[93] Johann Weyer was probably the first to isolate a long list of different terms in Hebrew Scripture traditionally translated as sorcerer, magician or witch, and to explore their distinct and separate meanings. He compiled his list with help from the Hebraist Andreas Masius (or Maes, 1514–73). Weyer drew the quite explicit conclusion from these researches that those who claimed to know Scripture, but did not understand the complex Hebrew lexicon on the subject, were doomed to write absurdities about witchcraft.[94] Weyer's philological approach proved extremely popular among Protestants. His list was copied and used to very similar effect by the critical English writers George Gifford (ca. 1548–1600)

[90] Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, bks. 3 and 6, as summarized in Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 194.

[91] Johann Georg Godelmann, *Tractatus de magis, veneficis et lamiis, deque his recte cognoscendis et puniendis* (Frankfurt, 1601), bks. 2 and 3.

[92] See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 526–45, for an excellent summary.

[93] Jean Calvin, *Avertissement contre l'astrologie : Traité des reliques* (Paris: Colin, 1962), 31; Kaspar Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (Wittenberg, 1553), fol. 127r.

[94] Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, 93–98.

and Reginald Scot (*d.* 1599).[95] Lambert Daneau provided an alternative version of the list, without the sceptical glosses.[96] In the fullness of time the inevitable lesson, that languages about magic and demonology were culturally specific and hard to translate, would be more widely drawn.

6. *Apparitions of the Dead*

The philological and biblical approach to Scriptural names for magic also helped to inform discussion of the great test-case for the alleged apparitions of souls of the dead, the vision of Samuel conjured up by the Witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28. This impeccably biblical but deeply troubling story preoccupied exegetes and demonologists for generations. King Saul, on the brink of defeat by the Philistines, and having expelled most of the soothsayers from the land, goes to one of the remaining ones at Endor. He asks her to conjure the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel. An apparition of Samuel rises up at the soothsayer's bidding and foretells Saul's imminent defeat and death.[97] The problems generated by this story were manifold. If the apparition was Samuel, how was it that a soothsayer or necromancer could raise him up? Why would a righteous prophet say to an unrighteous king that "tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be *with me*"? If the apparition was a demon impersonating Samuel, how was the demon given genuine insight and foreknowledge? Why did the Wisdom of Sirach say of Samuel that "even after he fell asleep he prophesied and showed the king his end"?[98] The most detailed, and in the end definitive, Protestant treatment of the case appeared in Peter Martyr Vermigli's commentaries on Samuel.[99] Vermigli rapidly excluded all options for explaining the apparition except that it was the soul of Samuel or a demon. As it was unthinkable that God would allow the soul of a righteous person to be summoned by a necromancer, he concluded that the apparition was a demon, but

[95] George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers: By Which Men are and have bin Greatly Deluded* (London, 1587), ch. 3, sigs. B3r–C4r; Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft*, bk. 5, ch. 4, 82ff.

[96] Daneau, *Dialogus de veneficis*, 197–200.

[97] 1 Samuel 28:3–19.

[98] Sirach 46:20.

[99] Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In duos libros Samuelis prophetae [. . .] commentarii doctissimi*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1567), fols. 162v–68r.

noted that previous exegetes had come to different or contradictory conclusions. Most subsequent commentators followed Vermigli's lead—until the issues changed in the seventeenth century.

Protestants were able to be clear about the case of the Witch of Endor because their stance on the issue of apparitions of the dead in general was hardening into greater unanimity, at least among the theological elite. In the late Middle Ages tales had often been told about appearances of ghosts, usually to the effect that souls of the dead were allowed to visit their relatives to ask for post-mortem suffrages and offerings to speed their way through purgatory. The idea of such a vision or dream-apparition was of course very ancient. With the ever broader diffusion of belief in purgatory, however, the way was open for such ghost stories to become more frequent—and with it the reputation for fraud and abuse which hung around the clergy who reported them.[100] Post-mortem religious services rested specifically on the belief that offerings made could enhance the spiritual condition of a soul in purgatory, to make it fit for heaven. Such claims ran completely counter to the Reformation theology of salvation. The reformers lost little time in disposing of these tales as demonic fictions. Kaspar Peucer referred dismissively to classical myths about the shades of the dead wandering the earth, then compared them to the "foolish fictions about purgatory." He expanded on the point a little in a later edition, pointing out how the devil had increased belief in such visions, to establish the false belief in idolatrous masses for the dead.[101] The Zurich theologian Ludwig Lavater (1527–86) published the first edition of his *Von Gespänsten, unghüren Fälen, und anderen wunderbaren Dingen* (On Spectres, Apparitions, and Great and Unaccustomed Noises, and Various Presages) in German in 1569 and in Latin in 1570.[102] In the first part Lavater affirmed that apparitions known as

[100] See, for example, the story reported in Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami*, ed. P. S. Allen, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906–58), 7:462f, no. 2037, and discussed in Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, 51–52.

[101] Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (1553), fol. 121r, and compare Peucer, *Commentarius, de praecipuis generibus divinationum* (1560), fol. 151v.

[102] Ludwig Lavater, *Von Gespänsten, unghüren, fälen, und anderen wunderbaren Dingen so merteils wenn die Menschen sterben söllend, oder wenn sunst grosse Sachen unnd Enderungen vorhanden sind [. . .] einfaltiger Bericht* (Zurich, 1569); *De spectris, lemuribus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus, variisque praesagitionibus quae plerunque obitum hominum, magnas clades, mutationesque imperiorum praecedunt, liber unus* (Geneva, 1570). Subsequent editions appeared in 1575, 1580, and in the seventeenth century.

ghosts did actually appear, though he also gleefully reported various instances where priests counterfeited apparitions for corrupt reasons. In the second part he systematically dismantled the Catholic belief in the apparitions of souls in purgatory. The notions of purgatory and limbo as destinies for souls lacked any basis in Scripture or the early Fathers. Demons could and would counterfeit the appearances of spirits in order to disorder the Christian religion, as Peucer had argued.[103] Most if not all apparitions of ghosts, often regarded as portents and presages of great events and the deaths of people, came from demons and were therefore speculative. Since demons did not really know the future, their predictions were just educated guesses.[104] This Protestant explanation of ghosts as demons was echoed, in detail, by Weyer, Marti, and Godelmann.[105]

Lavater's caustic work would earn furious rebuttals from an array of Catholic antagonists, who would copy much of his information in order to re-interpret it in the exact opposite way to that which he had intended.[106] One may legitimately debate how far this critique of ghost beliefs was fully embraced and believed at popular level. However, it is interesting to note that a century or so later, when beliefs about ghosts had relaxed in some quarters, a moderately educated person in England could tell a woman, who had invoked the testimony of the ghost of her dead husband in a territorial dispute, that "neither she *nor her Devil* [...] should make him forego his

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An English translation appeared, entitled *Of Ghostes and Spirites, VValking by Night and of Straunge Noyses, Crackes, and Sundrie Forewarnings: Which Commonly happen before the Death of Men; Great Slaughters, and Alterations of Kingdoms*, trans. Robert Harrison (London, 1596).

[103] Lavater, *De spectris,* part 2, ch. 15; *Of Ghostes and Spirites,* 163.

[104] Lavater, *De spectris,* part 2, chs. 15–18.

[105] Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors*, bk 1, ch. 12, 33, and ch. 13, passim, also ch. 17, 56; Aretius, *Problemata theologica*, article "Spectra," part 1, fols. 54v–56v; Godelmann, *Tractatus de magis,* 35. For modern literature on the subject, see B. Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation" in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 87–109; P. Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002); the articles collected in John Newton and Jo Bath, eds., *Early Modern Ghosts: Proceedings of the "Early Modern Ghosts" Conference held at St. John's College, Durham University on 24 March 2001* (Durham: Centre for Seventeenth-century Studies, 2002).

[106] See Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, with particular reference to Noël Taillepied, *Traité de l'apparition des esprits: A scavoir, des ames separees, fantosmes, prodiges, & accidents merveilleux, qui precedent quelquefois la mort des grands personnages, ou signifient changemens de la chose publique* (Rouen, 1600).

Land." When the same ghost appeared to the one holding on to the estate, he accused the woman that "she had sent the Devil to him."[107] The identification of ghosts as demons had become sufficiently rooted in popular belief that it could be expressed even in sudden anger. The outlawing of ghosts, in fact, contributed in Protestantism to the simplifying of concepts of apparitions more generally. Since new miracles were no longer to be expected, people were not to expect apparitions of saints, nor of holy people of any other kind.

7. *The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Seventeenth Century*

The systematic theory of spirits associated with Christianised, scholastic Aristotelianism largely prevailed through the sixteenth century in both Protestant and Catholic countries. In the latter, it was even strengthened by the formal adoption of Thomism as canonical in both Jesuit and Dominican centres of education.[108] In northern Europe especially, the seventeenth century saw the shattering of this consensus and, with it, a startling confusion over beliefs in spirits. Neoplatonism, previously associated mostly with esoteric intellectuals, became intellectually mainstream, especially in England in the hands of Cambridge Platonists such as Henry More (1614–87). More in his *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* (1671) propounded a theory of spirits designed explicitly to refute materialism and scepticism.[109] Alongside a revived Platonism ran the vogue for the ideas of Descartes.[110] Descartes's strong sense of a mind-body dichotomy inevitably had implications for the ideas of what spiritual beings were possible, and how they might be composed. In the eyes of its opponents (at least) it posed the possibility that an intellect could

[107] Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, *Saducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions: In Two Parts; The First treating of their Possibility; The Second of their Real Existence*, 3rd ed. (London, 1688), Relation 15, 417–18.

[108] For the use of Aquinas in Jesuit education, see Euan Cameron, "'Civilized Religion' from the Renaissance to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation," in *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas*, ed. Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 49–66, here 58.

[109] More's *Enchiridion* is translated as "The Easie, True and Genuine Notion [. . .] of the Nature of a Spirit," in Glanvill and More, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 133–253.

[110] For the influence of Descartes, see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 264–65.

not act directly on a body, which would have potentially disallowed most of the current theories about the actions of angels and demons.

Distinct from the Cartesians, though often regarded as an equal or greater menace, were materialists of the type represented by Thomas Hobbes. In keeping with his vocally expressed contempt for scholastic metaphysics, Hobbes argued that the universe was made up of bodily matter: "there is no reall part thereof that is not also body." Body and substance were in effect the same thing; so to speak of "incorporeal substance" was to utter a contradiction like an "incorporeal body."[111] In common speech "body" was chiefly used to describe physically palpable or visible matter: the air and such rarefied material were often called breath, wind or indeed "spirit." "Spirit" either signified tenuous and rarefied matter, or gave a name to the non-existent phantasms of the imagination. Hobbes elevated into a consistent principle the reading (already foreshadowed in Reginald Scot and some sectaries) according to which, in Scripture, "spirit" was commonly used metaphorically, to mean the qualities of God or of human beings guided by God, including wisdom and submission to the power of God.[112] "Inspiration" described the state of being guided either by the spirit of God or by evil spirits; the notion of being "inspired" or "possessed" by a spirit was a metaphor, and did not mean that virtues or vices were "bodies to be carried hither and thither, and to be powred into men, as into barrels."[113]

Other critical religious thinkers besides Hobbes adopted the approach, anticipated by earlier thinkers such as Kaspar Peucer, whereby any religious opinions which they disapproved of were traced historically back to pagan roots. Balthasar Bekker (1634–98) the Dutch Reformed theologian, teacher, and pastor acquired almost as much notoriety as Hobbes. In his massive and notoriously controversial four-part study of demons and witches entitled *De betoverde weereld* (The World Bewitched), Bekker reviewed how the doctrines of spirits arose in pagan religions, in the great monotheisms, and in Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. Bekker took

[111] In ch. 34 of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1968), 428–29.

[112] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 429–32.

[113] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 432–42.

as his primary argument quite a simple theme: the doctrine of "spirits" originated with the minor deities and demigods of ancient paganism.[114] If Christians would only renounce these foreign appendages to their belief, they could restore their monotheistic faith to its pristine purity. Bekker revisited the principle (already seen above in Gennadius) that only God could be described as pure spirit.[115] He then reasoned that it was inconsistent with the perfect sovereignty of God for such intermediate demigods or spirits to exist. Human souls were spirits, and indeed immortal spirits; but all other supposed "spirits" were to be rejected.[116]

Those Protestant thinkers who wished to preserve belief in spiritual creatures were now cut off from the consensus which, in much of the Catholic world, saved the appearances for spiritual beings. Probably there were more believers in spiritual creatures in the seventeenth century than there were sceptics; but some of the former chose to represent themselves as under siege from an army of atheists and unbelievers. Polemical writers referred to "that dull Lethargy of Atheism and Saducism" from which sceptics must be awakened. Understandably in the confusion of metaphysical theories then current, such investigators resorted to pure empiricism, collecting testimonies and experimental evidence. As Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) put it, "what is it, the wit of man can find out in such an abstruse subject, but what is grounded (besides the authority of Scripture) upon experience?"[117] "Experimentalism" has tended to enjoy a positive reputation among historians of science, for the good reason that it by-passed cosmological and physical theories which were mostly wrong. In the area of spirits, however, experimentalism tended to provoke almost unrestrained credulity,

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[114] Balthasar Bekker, *De betoverde weereld, zynde een grondig ondersoek van't gemeen gevoelen aangaande de geesten, deselver aart en vermogen, bewind en bedrijf: als ook't gene de menschen door derselver kraght en gemeenschap doen*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1691–93). German translation: *Die bezauberte Welt, oder, Eine gründliche Untersuchung des allgemeinen Aberglaubens*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1693); French, *Le monde enchanté: ou, Examen des communs sentimens touchant les esprits, leur nature, leur pouvoir, leur administration, & leurs operations*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1694); partial English translation (1695). See discussion in Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 264–69.

[115] See above, note 60.

[116] Bekker, *De betoverde weereld,* vol. 2, chs. 1–5.

[117] Meric Casaubon, *A Treatise Proving Spirits, Witches, and Supernatural Operations, by Pregnant Instances and Evidences: Together with other Things worthy of Note* (London, 1672), 135.

especially as whatever "evidence" could be claimed to prove the existence of spirits was embraced with such uncritical enthusiasm. Without spirits, the empiricists argued, there could be no certainty of belief in God; so the evidence for spirits must be thoroughly examined and circulated in print.[118] Consequently earlier limits to belief in the powers of demons were largely abandoned. In this world-view spirits and forms of divination could genuinely foretell future events. Ghosts of dead people might appear voluntarily to offer vitally important information. Angels could be deployed (or employed) for scientific knowledge or medical practice. Spirits could be material, immaterial, or something in between: Joseph Glanvill (1636–80) proposed the rather charming theory that spirits appeared only briefly, because it was painful for them to compress their bodies into a sufficiently dense consistency to become visible.[119] Magical transformations into other shapes could occur after all; the use of counter-magic to detect and reverse demonic charms was not only permissible but encouraged.[120] In the end this catch-all approach to spiritual beings was doomed as a premise for serious scientific thought. However, its popular descendants, which cherished beliefs in ghosts and spirits shorn of any binary theological principles, would become firmly embedded in aspects of popular culture and still remain so.

8. *Conclusion*

Beliefs about spirits have only ever been rather tenuously restrained within the boundaries set by officially approved religious teachings. In the Middle Ages, and the era of Reformations both Protestant and Catholic, scholars hoped that by a priori reasoning and ecclesiastical discipline they could rein in the exuberances of popular belief—which in all probability they sincerely believed to derive from the suggestions of spirits at best mischievous and probably evil. In retrospect this aspiration to control, domesticate, and purify traditional beliefs, entirely of a piece with early modern cultural attitudes in other areas, appears massively over-ambitious.

[118] See e.g., Glanvill and More, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 17–19, 23, 72–73.
[119] Glanvill and More, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 91.
[120] See the arguments discussed in Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 278–82.

The Reformation and its aftermath delivered unexpected and uncontrollable shocks to European patterns of belief. Even though it was the last thing intended by the early reformers, the drift of their thought, with its stress on rational causation, the abandonment of belief in routine miracles, and the stripping-away of apocryphal traditions, tended to foreshadow a view of the cosmos where independent spirit-creatures had less and less space. Spirits, as Girolamo Zanchi pointed out, had become rare because they were no longer necessary, just as miracles had done. However, a world without visible, recorded, palpable manifestations of the supernatural was a frightening place to many in the seventeenth century, especially in England. The more that philosophical change appeared to make the world safe for unbelievers, the more the ghost- and demon-hunting empiricists searched for irrefutable forensic evidence of the "invisible world."

In the end their fears appear to have been largely mistaken. Organised Christianity continues to hold considerable influence in many parts of the world, without a strongly felt need to integrate a world of invisible, intelligent beings into its systems. However, belief in spiritual creatures not only persists independently, but at times threatens to acquire some of the characteristics of a new religion in its own right. *Time* magazine ran a cover feature on belief in angels on 27 December 1993, following a survey which claimed to prove that 69% of Americans believed in their existence. The article cited numerous leading theologians and serious biblical scholars for the history of beliefs in angels. The article also slightingly described New Age religious beliefs on the topic as "fluff and meringue." The condescension of intellectuals towards these kinds of belief continues to make itself felt.

CHAPTER TWO

DANGEROUS VISIONS: THE EXPERIENCE OF TERESA OF AVILA AND THE TEACHING OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

COLIN THOMPSON

Interest in the discernment of spirits was widespread in Golden Age Spain and can be found in unexpected places. Juan Huarte de San Juan (1529–88), whose *Examen de ingenios* of 1575 attempted to account for different psychological traits on a physiological basis, is one of the more sceptical writers of the period, disinclined to offer supernatural explanations for strange phenomena if rational, natural ones can be found.[1] Yet in recounting the case of a madwoman who appeared to possess prophetic powers he concluded:

> Los que dijeron que las virtudes y vicios que descubría la frenética a las personas que la entraban a ver era artífice del demonio, sepan que Dios da a los hombres cierta gracia sobrenatural para alcanzar y conocer qué obras son de Dios y cuáles del demonio, la cual cuenta San Pablo entre los dones divinos y la llama *discretio spirituum*; con la cual se conoce si es demonio o algún ángel bueno el que nos viene a tocar. Porque muchas veces viene el demonio a engañarnos con

[1] This work is a good example of how writers treated these phenomena within the epistemological framework available to them. As Sluhovsky notes: "In all cases of both divine and diabolic possessions, there was something that persuaded contemporaries that they were confronting a diabolic or a divine causality, rather than 'organic' illness such as insanity, hysteria, paralysis, imbecility, or epilepsy, all classifications of afflictions that were not unfamiliar to early modern people. A demonic or divine etiology existed in their classificatory system side by side with natural definitions. If they chose, however, not to employ the 'natural' categories and, instead, ascribed the behaviors to 'possession', it was not a result of the inadequacy of their intelligence or medical knowledge." Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2–3.

> apariencia de buen ángel, y es menester esta gracia y este don sobrenatural para conocerle y diferenciarlo del bueno.[2]
>
> Let those who said that the virtues and vices this madwoman revealed to those who came to see her were the work of the devil know that God gives men a particular supernatural grace so that they can grasp and know which are God's works and which the devil's. St Paul numbers this among the divine gifts and calls it *discretio spirituum*, by which it can be known whether we are dealing with a case of the devil or a good angel. For the devil often comes to deceive us under the guise of a good angel, and this grace and supernatural gift is necessary to know him and to distinguish him from the good angel.[3]

Huarte de San Juan's contemporaries, the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite saints, Teresa of Avila (1515–82) and John of the Cross (1542–91), have an assured place in the history of Western mysticism, and it is not surprising that they deal extensively with the discernment of spirits. They collaborated in the Carmelite Reform and each left behind a substantial literary corpus.[4] But their writ-

[2] Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de ingenios,* ed. Guillermo Serés (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), 317–18. Very little is known for certain about his life, other than that he was Navarrese, a doctor by profession, and probably died in 1588. His book, however, enjoyed great success. The first edition was followed by four others within six years, until its inclusion in the *Index et catalogus librorum prohibitorum* of 1581 (published separately but concurrently with the *Index librorum expurgatorum* of 1583). It was translated into English in 1594 by Richard Carew (1555–1620), from the Italian version of 1582, as *The Examination of Men's Wits*, with further editions in 1596, 1604, and 1616. The first French edition appeared in 1580, followed by twelve others by 1633. For details, see the edition above, 108–9, 119–22.

[3] All translations are mine except where indicated.

[4] Teresa's principal works are her *Vida* (Life, 1562–64); *Camino de perfección* (Way of Perfection, 1562–64); *Moradas del castillo interior* (Mansions of the Interior Castle, 1577); and *Libro de las fundaciones* (Book of Foundations, 1573–79). She also produced several other, shorter works and a number of poems in popular metres. Her works were first published in 1588, edited by the great Augustinian Golden Age poet and biblical commentator, Fray Luis de León (famous for having been imprisoned for nearly five years by the Inquisition, before being exonerated). John's writings include some of the finest lyrical poems in the Spanish language, and the three major treatises he produced as commentaries on them: the *Subida del monte Carmelo* (Ascent of Mount Carmel) and *Noche oscura del alma* (Dark Night of the Soul), in reality one, unfinished work; the *Cántico espiritual* (Spiritual Canticle), which exists in two redactions; and the *Llama de amor viva* (*Living Flame of Love*), which was also revised. His works were not published until 1618, and then without the *Cántico*, which first appeared in a French edition only in 1622 and eventually in Spanish in 1627. Teresa was canonized in 1622; John had to wait until 1726. Both have been declared Doctors of the Church, John in 1926, Teresa in 1970.

ings are very different in style and content: Teresa subjective, colloquial and direct; John (in his prose works) detached, objective, and analytical. The question of the discernment of visions as demonic snares or divine gifts is one which occupies a central place in their accounts of the spiritual journey, and their treatment of it reflects these differences. I shall first outline what each of them has to say about the subject, before arguing that their distinctive contributions have more to do with issues of gender and genre than with any apparent contradiction between them.[5]

Before I consider their teachings on visionary experience, I should, however, make two preliminary observations. First, the meaning of the word "alma" (soul) as used by both writers, is considerably wider than modern usage allows. It is perhaps more helpful to think of it in terms of the self, in both its conscious and sub-conscious modes of operation. In the writings of the Carmelite mystics it refers to the whole inner life of an individual in the operations of the three inner faculties of memory, understanding, and will. "Alma" thus includes not only the positive qualities we associate with the concept, but also negative ones, such as an attachment to past habits which needs to be broken; false ideas which require correction; and disordered desires or appetites which must be purged. Second, although I shall confine my discussion specifically to the question of discernment of visions, both Teresa and John also deal with a much wider range of related experiences, such as raptures and locutions, and generally apply the same interpretative principles to these other phenomena.

1. *Teresa of Avila*

Between chapters 27 and 38 of the *Vida*, the first version of which she completed in 1562, Teresa describes many visions; at least twenty, some of which occur more than once. She begins in chapter 27 with her intellectual vision of the sacred Humanity, followed by a vision of the risen Christ (28) and the famous vision of the Transverberation (29), which she tells us happened several times. In

[5] For a detailed account of the ways in which any differences between the two may be reconciled, see E.W. Trueman Dicken, *The Crucible of Love* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963); also Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (London: Constable, 1967), 30–35.

subsequent chapters she records visions of devils and hell, of St Joseph and St Clare, the departed (including family members), of herself in the company of Christ and Mary, of the Holy Spirit as a dove, of Christ crucified, and finally, in chapter 38, what she describes as her highest vision to date, the sacred Humanity more glogloriously than ever before, which she has seen on three further occasions. As she struggles to find words to describe these visions, she recounts both the effects they had on her, usually consoling and strengthening except when they involve demons or hell, and the reactions of those responsible for her progress, usually negative and critical, with the important exception of her meetings with the future saints Francis Borgia and Peter of Alcántara in 1557 and 1560 respectively, recorded in chapters 24 and 27.[6]

In this essay, I have chosen to look at two representative passages from these chapters: the first vision that Teresa records, in chapter 27, and the account she gives in the following chapter of the struggles she experiences in consequence of her second vision, of the resurrected Christ. The first vision took the following form:

> Estando un día del glorioso san Pedro en oración, vi cabe mí, u sentí, por mijor decir, que con los ojos del cuerpo ni del alma no vi nada, mas parecíame estava junto cabe mí Cristo y vía ser El el que me hablava, a mi parecer [...] Parecíame andar siempre a mi lado Jesucristo y, como no era visión imaginaria, no vía en qué forma; mas estar siempre al lado derecho sentíalo muy claro y que era testigo de todo lo que yo hacía y que ninguna vez que me recogiese un poco, u no estuviese muy divertida, podía ignorar que estava cabe de mí.[7] (27.2)

[6] Teresa's experiences were apparently already attracting unfavourable comment in Avila. Francis Borgia (1510–72) visited the city in his capacity as commissary-general for the Spanish Jesuits, who had established themselves in the city in 1551. Teresa tells us that her confessor and Salcedo arranged for her to meet him (24.4). The Franciscan Peter of Alcántara (1499–1562) came to Avila to discuss the foundation of a new monastery with Teresa's close friend the widowed noblewoman Doña Guiomar de Ulloa (who was connected to Teresa's convent, La Encarnación, and to whom Teresa refers in *Vida* 24.6). For further details see Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink, *Tiempo y vida de Santa Teresa* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1968), 106–7, 128–32.

[7] Teresa's syntax often follows patterns of speech rather than the norms of the written language. Her frequent use of the verb "parecer" (to seem), is a marker in her writing for passages in which she is attempting to describe an experience in her own words. We may deduce this from her comment in *Vida* 39.8, where she

> While at prayer on a feast of the glorious St Peter, I saw, or rather I should say, felt at my side, since I saw nothing with the eyes of my body or soul, yet it seemed to me that Christ was standing beside me and I saw that it was He who was speaking to me, as I thought [. . .] Jesus Christ seemed to be constantly at my side, and as this was not an imaginary vision I could not see in what form; but I felt very clearly that he was at my right side and that he witnessed everything I was doing, and whenever I became somewhat recollected or was not especially distracted, I could not but be aware of the fact that he was beside me.

She then gives a vivid account of what happened when she told her confessor. He asks her difficult questions: How did she know it was Christ? Who told her that it was? Her reply is equally insistent: "El me lo dice muchas veces, respondí yo; mas antes que me lo dijese se imprimió en mi entendimiento que era El" (27.5: I replied, he tells me so many times; but before he told me the fact that it was He was imprinted on my mind).

This first vision came at a time when, as she tells us, she normally experienced the Prayer of Quiet and often, for long periods, unitive prayer (23.2) but she was uncertain what exactly these were. She had also received locutions from the Lord.[8] This was not, as one might think, a source of strength to her: "Yo, como en estos tiempos havían acaecido grandes ilusiones en mujeres y engaños que los havía hecho el demonio, comencé a temer" (23.2: As at this time there had been great delusions among women and deceptions done by the devil, I began to be afraid).[9] She sought advice from a devout

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explains that she is careful to differentiate words which come "de mi cabeza" (from my head) from those which the Lord has given her.

[8] Teresa's terminology for the different states of prayer is problematic. Her "oración de quietud" (Prayer of Quiet) appears to be a state of infused contemplative prayer, beyond meditation and the active engagement of the faculties, but short of full experience of union with the divine. For a detailed analysis of the difficulties of the translation and definition of the term, see Trueman Dicken, *The Crucible of Love*, 173, 179–84, 193–213.

[9] For a full account of Teresa's struggles during this period, see Elena Carrera, *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography: Authority, Power and the Self in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Spain* (London: MHRA and Maney, 2005); here, especially 135–40. On the issue of the Inquisition's attitude towards visionary women, see Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002); Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz, eds., *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), especially 93–120; and, Jesús Imirizaldu, *Monjas y beatas embaucadoras* (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1977).

married layman, Francisco de Salcedo, her "cavallero santo" (23.6: holy gentleman), and submitted a written account of her spiritual life to him and to a highly regarded local priest, Gaspar Daza.[10] Their response was troubling to her because both concluded that she was the victim of demonic deception.

Rather than continue advising her, Salcedo and Daza told Teresa to approach the Jesuits for help and to write an account of her life in the form of a general confession (*Vida* 23.14). According to Carrera, the Jesuits at the time "were prepared to direct women, leading them through the *Ejercicios* [the *Spiritual Exercises*] and teaching them to meditate."[11] She therefore began to confess to a young member of the Society, Diego de Cetina (1531–68), whose verdict on her experiences was more positive (23.16).[12] But her relief did not last long: Cetina left Avila only two months later. Chapters 24–27 chronicle her desperate state, isolated and afraid, torn between a conviction that her experiences were from God because their effects on her were so good, and the almost unanimous view of those in authority that they were not, the exception being her encounter with Francis Borgia, who told her that God's spirit was inspiring her and that she should resist it no longer (24.4). Her situation was made the worse when Daza, Salcedo, and others intervened to insist to her confessor that her experiences were demonic, with the result that she was told to receive communion less frequently and to find ways of avoiding solitude (25.14). Later, as her visions increased, her confessor ordered her to cross herself and "dar higas" (to make a rude gesture with her fist at them), which caused her great distress (29.5).

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[10] Salcedo (d. 1580) was a relative by marriage of Teresa and was admired for his exemplary spiritual life. Daza (d. 1592) was a canon of Avila Cathedral, an expert in canon law and ascetic theology, and a follower of Juan de Avila (ca. 1500–69). Famous for his apostolic activity in Andalusia, Avila was suspicious of what he termed "atajos" (short cuts) to God, and it is therefore not surprising that Daza treated Teresa's claims with suspicion. Daza did not act as Teresa's confessor; the two men saw her together, to advise her about what she should do. For further details see Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Steggink, *Tiempo y vida*, 103–6, and Carrera, *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 108–12.

[11] Carrera, *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 121.

[12] Teresa remained with Jesuit confessors until 1566: after Diego de Cetina, Juan de Prádanos (1528–97), from 1555–56; then Baltasar Álvarez (1533–80), from 1556–66.

When Teresa's visions began, a new layer of complexity was added to her situation. Her accounts of them vividly witness to the prolonged suffering she endured when caught between conflicting assessments of her experiences, based on the one hand on her own discernment of their significance, and on the other, on that of her spiritual superiors. Her visions are characteristically sources of assurance to her that she is on the right path, but at the same time constitute a crisis because they bring her into conflict with the Church authorities. When she writes: "Es una cosa tan de espíritu esta manera de visión [...] que ningún bullicio hay en las potencias ni en los sentidos, a mi parecer, por donde el demonio pueda sacar nada" (27.7: this kind of vision is so spiritual a thing [...] that there is no disturbance to the faculties or to the senses, in my view, for which reason the devil can gain no advantage from it), she is both replying to the criticisms of her confessors and advisors and, more boldly, engaging in her own process of discernment. In this case, she explains, the effects of the vision are all positive, and include instantaneous infused knowledge of theological mysteries such as the Trinity, such that "no hay teólogo con quien no se atreviese a disputar la verdad de estas grandezas" (27.9: there is no theologian with whom she [the soul] would not dare to dispute on the truth of these great things). As she describes her visions, she insists on the benefits they bring, such as increased humility and charity, and despite what those who are supposed to be expert in discernment tell her, cannot bring herself to believe that Satan would choose weapons like these with which to attack a soul.

In the following chapter she expands on this theme, after describing her vision of Christ "como se pinta resucitado" (28.3: as he is painted risen) on the feast of St Paul. It is an imaginary vision, but not seen with the eyes of the body, only those of the soul.[13] Later, she clarifies that this kind of vision almost always accompanies intellectual visions (28.9). It worries her because "los que saben mijor que yo" (those who know better than I do) claim the devil is at his most deceptive in corporeal visions, but because she did not realize this at the time she wanted to see the vision with her bodily eyes so

[13] Teresa refers in 28.3–4 to three kinds of visions, corporeal (seen with the eyes of the body), imaginary (seen with the eyes of the soul), and intellectual (the highest kind), impressed directly on the soul without any activity on the part of the faculties.

that her confessor would not tell her that she was a victim of delusion (28.4). In coming to believe that it was genuine because its beauty and its light were far beyond anything the mind could imagine, she produces one of her most beautiful images, as she compares the light she saw, beyond anything earthly, to clear water flowing over crystal and sparkling in the sunshine (28.5). It is, she says, for "letrados" (learned men), not her, to work out how the Lord grants so dazzling a light and so clear an impression in the mind (28.6). Addressing the Dominican theologian García de Toledo (d. 1590), who had ordered her to write her book, she makes a characteristic show of deference to his ability to discern the nature of visions on the one hand, and an equally characteristic statement of what she has learnt through experience: "El cómo el Señor lo hace, vuestra merced lo dirá mijor y declarará lo que fuere escuro y yo no supiere decir" (28.7: How the Lord does this your honour will be able better to say and explain whatever might be unclear and beyond my capacity to say). Sometimes she thinks that her visions are like drawings or paintings, but these are dead things, whereas what she "sees" is alive. Then, turning to address Jesus, she claims that in this vision "se ve claro [...] el poco poder de todos los demonios en comparación del vuestro" (28.9: it can clearly be seen how little power all the demons have in comparison with yours).

This vision imprints the majesty and beauty of God on the soul (28.9); it raises the soul to a very high degree of love for God. For these reasons she believes it to be without danger: "por los efectos se conoce no tiene fuerza aquí el demonio" (28.10: by its effects one knows that the devil has no power here). Indeed, she confesses that occasionally the devil "me ha querido representar de esta suerte a el mesmo Señor en representación falsa: toma la forma de carne, mas no puede contrahacerla con la gloria que cuando es de Dios" (28.10: has wished to represent the same Lord to me in this way but falsely: he takes the same form of flesh, but cannot counterfeit the glory it has when it comes from God). Moreover, these demonic visions have caused the soul disquiet, and it "pierde la devoción y gusto que antes tenía y queda sin ninguna oración" (28.10: loses the devotion and pleasure it formerly had and is left unable to pray). Souls cannot be deceived as long as they proceed with "humildad" (humility) and "simplicidad" (simplicity). She rejects the view that her imagination is the cause of such visions, since what she has seen is so beyond its ability to conceive. In chapter 31 she describes further how the devil

has tried to deceive her on many occasions. All through these chapters, then, Teresa is on the one hand bowing to the representatives of ecclesiastical authority while on the other demonstrating that it is her prayerful experience and not their learning which is the source of her ability to distinguish between the divine and the demonic.

Such, she tells us, were the explanations she gave those who told her that her visions were demonic and that she was deluded. They were good, holy people, but God was not leading them in this way and they were therefore afraid, a comment which is instructive because, without her wishing to claim that her way is superior, she attributes their failure to understand her and to discern the nature of her visions to their inexperience in mystical prayer (28.12). Her new Jesuit confessor, Baltasar Álvarez (ca. 1533–80), of whose sanctity she speaks most warmly, did not have sufficient confidence in his abilities and was warned by others to beware of her, so that she began to worry that no confessor ever would understand her (28.14). Every vision brought her fresh fears (28.16). Her accusers believed she was lacking in humility, and if she replied as plainly and simply as she could to their criticisms, they then accused her of setting herself up as a teacher (28.17), a role which, by Pauline prescription (1 Corinthians 14:34–35), was forbidden to women. She writes in this way as an implicit warning about inexperienced confessors and directors, a theme John of the Cross would take up with much greater force.[14] Likewise, it is clear that these painful conflicts represented part of her own experience of what he would call the dark night of the soul, as her comment about dryness and the apparent absence of God in 28.9 suggests.[15] Interestingly, by the time of the final vision she records, in 38.17, probably in 1562, she is emerging from this prolonged period of crisis. The most significant intervening event, the beginning of the Carmelite Reform and her foundation of the first Discalced house, San José, had been undertaken with the blessing of her superiors, though it provided an exterior analogue in the realm of local and ecclesiastical politics to

[14] See note 21, below.

[15] Teresa refers to times "cuando quiere el Señor que padezca el alma una sequedad y soledad grande [. . .], que aun entonces de Dios parece se olvida" (when the Lord wishes a soul to suffer great dryness and solitude, so that it then seems to forget even God).

the internal struggles of Teresa between her own determination on the one hand and doubters and opponents on the other.[16]

2. *John of the Cross*

John of the Cross's most substantive analysis of visions comes in the second book of his treatise *Subida del monte Carmelo* (The Ascent of Mount Carmel).[17] Like his other treatises, it takes the form of a commentary on one of his poems, in this case "En una noche oscura" (On a dark night), a lyrical celebration of the night-time search of the lover for the Beloved and of their subsequent union. In this treatise, as in its sister-treatise *La noche oscura del alma* (The Dark Night of the Soul), which together form one unfinished work, he analyses the most famous of all his symbols for the spiritual journey to union with God. Unlike the *Cántico espiritual* (Spiritual Canticle) and the *Llama de amor viva* (Living Flame of Love), neither the *Subida* nor the *Noche* offers a complete commentary on the images of the poem in question, and both are largely concerned with the first line, the dark night on which the lover set out in search of the Beloved in its fourfold aspect, the active nights of the senses and the spirit (*Subida*) and the passive nights of the senses and spirit (*Noche*). John's treatment of visions and their discernment is both original and controversial because it calls into question much of the practice of his own day. Unlike Teresa's account, it is set out in a rigorously objective way. One can only speculate as to whether he himself had experiences similar to hers, or based his analysis on what he had learnt from his spiritual direction of fellow Carmelites, or, as seems most likely, both.

John begins his analysis in the *Subida*, as he always does, from theological first principles. Although he identifies various categories of visions, they are not of interest to him in themselves but as one example, albeit a significant one, of the kinds of pitfalls encountered

[16] On the history of the Carmelite Order, including the Discalced reform, see Joachim Smet, *The Carmelites: A History of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, 5 vols. (Darien, IL: The Carmelite Press, 1988). For the Spanish Carmelites, see Balbino Velasco Bayón, *Historia del Carmelo español*, 2 vols. (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1992).

[17] The exact date of composition is not known, but the *Subida* and the *Noche* commentaries must have been written in the early 1580s, after John had completed the first version of the *Cántico*. For the publication history, see note 4, above.

by those who have set out on the journey to union. The Aristotelian-Thomist principle which undergirds his analysis is the same one which guides him throughout, that all means must be proportionate to their end.[18] All creatures are related to God and have a trace of him, but all are infinitely distant from him. Thus, as he puts it, no creature can be a proximate means of union with God.[19] By creature he means all created things; not simply objects, but also human concepts and language, the imagination, the ways in which we think, even the ways in which we practise devotion. The principle is an ontological one. There is one Creator and all creatures exist in a relationship of dependence upon him. Creator and creatures are irrevocably other. Extreme care must therefore be taken to ensure that the soul is detached from everything which is creaturely, including the meditations on sacred things it may form in the imagination, so that, free of all such encumbrances, it may travel safely through the dark night in the nakedness of faith, the only means to union. The mind cannot therefore reach union through works of its own imagination (*Subida* 2.8.4), only the darkness of faith can achieve this (2.9; one notes here certain similarities with *The Cloud of Unknowing*). Having established this principle in *Subida* 2.8–9, he proceeds to explain in the following brief chapter how the mind may receive knowledge from natural or supernatural sources. His epistemology, Aristotelian-Thomist and not at all Platonic, means that knowledge is received into the mind through the exterior physical senses and stored in the intellect and the memory.[20] Supernatural knowledge can also be mediated through these or through the interior faculty of the imagination. In the latter case it may be very particular and clear, or general and vague. Visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings belong to the category of the particular, whereas "inteligencia oscura y general" (general,

[18] *Subida* 2.8.2; see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.II q. 96 art. 1; q. 102 art. 1.

[19] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.II q. 114 art. 2. John cites this principle in the heading to *Subida* 2.8, where it becomes the basis of his argument that only faith can be the means to union with God.

[20] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I q. 84 art. 6. In *Subida* 1.3.3 John combines the commonplace Platonic image of the soul as imprisoned in the body with an Aristotelian epistemology: "el alma, si no es lo que por los sentidos se le comunica, que son las ventanas de su cárcel, naturalmente por otra vía nada alcanzaría" (the soul would have no other access to any kind of natural knowledge than what the senses, the windows of its prison, communicate to it).

dark understanding) comes entirely from "la contemplación que se da en fe" (2.10.4: contemplation given in faith). These distinctions may seem technical, but they are essential for a proper assessment of John's teaching.

In the following chapter he specifies the kinds of experiences he has in mind when he refers to supernatural representations which come to the mind through the exterior senses. The soul may see "figuras y personajes de la otra vida [. . .], algunos santos, y figuras de ángeles buenos y malos, y algunas luces y resplandores extraordinarios" (2.11.1: figures and persons from the life beyond, saints, figures of good and bad angels, strange lights and shinings): precisely among the kinds of visions Teresa records. Then, for the first time, he enunciates what will become his watchword throughout his analysis of all such experiences. Even if they come from God, he says, one must never place any reliance on them; rather, "totalmente han de huir de ellas, sin querer examinar si son buenas o malas" (2.11.2: they are to be completely shunned, without seeking to examine whether they are good or bad). The reason is simple: they belong to the realm of the creaturely, because they come to the imagination, which receives all its knowledge via the physical senses. They are, in other words, a dangerous distraction from the goal of union with the Creator. One does not need to worry about their effects: if they come from God, their good consequences will in any case be felt. But they are more likely to be the work of the devil. He lists six dangers (2.11.7): loss of faith as the guiding principle; the soul's becoming dependent on the visible instead of rising to the invisible; belief in the appropriateness of such experiences, leading to failure to have true resignation and nakedness of spirit; attachment to their sensual element; becoming possessive of God's gifts; and opening the door to the devil. It is at this point that, in this very biblical writer's work, he includes one of only four citations of 2 Corinthians 11:14, "ipse enim Satanas transfigurat se in angelum lucis" (because Satan transforms himself into an angel of light).[21]

That visions are to be shunned and that it is not worth the effort of trying to discern their validity are among the most original and controversial aspects of John's teaching, and he will not depart from it as he proceeds to examine higher forms of visionary experience.

[21] The others occur in *Subida* 3.10.1 and 3.37.1, and in the *Dictámenes del espíritu* (Judgments of the Spirit), 22, recorded by his disciple Eliseo de los Mártires.

Another, which follows from his underlying principle that only God and not the creatures can bring about union with the Creator occurs in 2.12–13, where he explains why meditation must at a certain point be abandoned and gives the three concurrent signs by which it may be known that God is ready to lift a soul from meditation to contemplation (he will expand on this in chapters 14–15). Meditation consists of forming in the mind a mental picture, usually of a biblical scene, and most commonly of a moment from the Passion narrative: "es acto discursivo por medio de imágenes, formas y figuras, fabricadas e imaginadas por los dichos sentidos; así como imaginar a Cristo crucificado o en la columna o en otro paso, o considerar y imaginar la gloria como una hermosísima luz, etc." (2.12.3: [Meditation] is a discursive act by means of images, forms and figures, composed and imagined by the said [bodily] senses; such as imagining Christ crucified or tied to the column or at another moment in the Passion, or thinking of and imagining glory as a very beautiful light, etc.) The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola are the best known example, and Teresa, as we have seen, was certainly familiar with them.[22] But such imaginative techniques are humanly generated and therefore belong to the realm of the creatures. They were, of course, widely practised, especially in monastic communities, even though there were some churchmen who thought that women should limit themselves to vocal prayer on the grounds that once they were permitted to invent things in their head, all kinds of delusions would follow.[23] One can well imagine what they would have felt about a teaching which proposed that even meditation was a human construct and that insistence on its continuing, if the signs given were present together, could amount to acting in opposition to the will of God. This teaching undoubtedly represents John's low view of much contemporary spiritual direction. He returns to the subject of directors who do not understand the progress of their charges at much greater length and with considerable vehemence

[22] See, for example, Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink, *Tiempo y vida de Santa Teresa*, 109–10; Carrera, *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 121–24.

[23] Perhaps the most significant attack at this time on the dangers of mental prayer came in the *Diálogo sobre la necesidad y provecho de la oración y divines loores vocales* (Salamanca, 1555) by the Dominican Fray Juan de la Cruz (d. ca. 1560); see Carrera, *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 69–80. On the importance of the *Spiritual Exercises* in Spain at this time, see Terence O'Reilly, *From Ignatius Loyola to John of the Cross* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995).

in his commentary on the third verse of the "Llama de amor viva" poem (*Llama* 3.27–62).[24] It is exactly the same point made more briefly and less forcefully by Teresa when she attributes the failure of her confessors and directors to understand her to the fact that they had not been granted mystical prayer (*Vida* 28.12).

In *Subida* 2.16 John returns to "visiones imaginarias" given supernaturally, different from natural ones in that the exterior senses play no part in their coming, though the interior senses do: "sin los sentidos exteriores puede Dios y el demonio representar las mismas imágenes y especies, y mucho más hermosas y acabadas" (2.16.3: God and the devil can make the same images and objects appear without the exterior senses, and much more beautifully and perfectly). He describes the imagination as "la puerta y entrada para el alma" (16.4: the gate and entry-point to the soul). It is the place where the devil most typically comes with his tricks. But, he insists, he does not intend to provide assistance for determining which visions come from God and which from the devil, simply to instruct the mind so that good ones do not act as a barrier to union with God, and bad ones do not deceive:

> Y no hay para qué yo aquí me detenga en dar doctrina de indicios para que se conozcan cuáles visions serán de Dios y cuáles no, y cuáles en una manera y cuáles en otra; pues mi intento aquí no es ése, sino solo instruir al entendimiento en ellas, para que no se embarace y impida para la union con la divina Sabiduría con las buenas, ni se engañe en las falsas (2.16.5).
>
> And there is no reason for me here to pause to provide indicative teaching on how one is to know which visions will come from God and which not, and which are in one form and which the other, them, so that it is not encumbered by or impeded from union with divine Wisdom by the good ones, or deceived by the false ones.because this is not my purpose here, only simply to instruct the mind about them, so that it is not encumbered by or impeded from union with divine Wisdom by the good ones, or deceived by the false ones.

The next six chapters are devoted to a detailed examination of why, if such experiences are so dangerous, God should grant them at all. The answer, in broad terms, is that God deals with us as we are,

[24] See Colin Thompson, *St John of the Cross: Songs in the Night* (London: SPCK, 2002), 252–54.

creatures of flesh and blood; "va Dios perfeccionando al hombre al modo del hombre, por lo más bajo y exterior hasta lo más alto y interior" (2.17.4: God is acting to perfect man in a human way, from the lowliest and most external to the highest and most internal). I shall pass over these chapters, but not without drawing attention to what John writes about what he terms involuntary visions, that is, when imaginary visions or other kinds of supernatural apprehensions occur in the human senses at whatever stage they may be, without the will being involved; and whether these come from God or not. They too are to be shunned by the soul, as he has already made clear, because any good effects will be felt regardless, and, he adds, "por librarse del peligro y trabajo que hay en discernir las malas de las buenas; en que no hay provecho ninguno, sino gastar tiempo con aquello y ponerse en ocasiones de muchas imperfecciones y de no ir adelante" (2.17.7: in order to be delivered from the danger and effort there is in discerning the bad ones from the good, in which there is not the slightest benefit, except wasting time and thereby being at risk of many imperfections and failing to make progress). In other words, attempting to engage in discernment of such experiences is pointless. Nonetheless, John insists on the centrality of the role of the confessor: whatever experiences the soul may have, of whatever kind, they are to be brought to the director's attention, who is acting under God and will provide appropriate teaching, because obedience strengthens humility (2.18.16).

In 2.23 he resumes the discussion of visions, this time of those which are purely spiritual, passively received in the soul, that is, intellectual visions, of the kind we have examined in Teresa. Although these are better and surer, they are still to be rejected (23.4) because their creaturely status means that they cannot lead to union. Instead, "no ha de hacer archivo ni tesoro el alma ni ha de querer arrimarse a ellas, porque será estarse con aquellas formas, imágenes y personajes, que acerca del interior residen embarazada, y no iría por negación de todas las cosas a Dios" (2.24.7: the soul is not to store them or treasure them or cling to them, because that will mean being encumbered with those forms, images and persons which reside in her interior, and she would not go by negation of all things to God). He continues to insist on spiritual nakedness and poverty of spirit (2.24.9), that is, the emptying of the mind of all images and ideas *about* God so that it is free to receive the gift of union directly *from* God.

The following chapters deal largely with the direct revelation of truths and hidden mysteries to the soul (2.26–27) and with locutions (2.28–31). In some cases, when they are imprinted passively in the soul, John allows for the fact that little harm can come by them, but he still advises that they should be left behind. The highest of these are what he calls "palabras sustanciales" (31.1: substantial words), which should simply be accepted. But these are rare exceptions to his repeated insistence that the goal of the spiritual journey is union with God, which can only be reached when the mind is totally detached from everything it formerly knew or could imagine, and is open at last to be receptive to divine communication. He returns to a fuller analysis of the dangers which the soul faces if she puts her faith in what her memory holds in the first fourteen chapters of the third book of the *Subida*, but I hope I have said enough to give a clear outline of John's teaching. He entirely accepts that visions occur. He distinguishes various kinds, from the purely natural to those which God or the devil may imprint on the imagination or the mind. But when it comes to discernment his view is radically different from the majority, including Teresa's confessors and spiritual directors, who expended great effort in persuading her that she was deluded or subject to demonic temptation, with the result that she found herself caught excruciatingly between necessary obedience to her spiritual superiors and her deep belief that her visionary experiences were from God, because they strengthened her in humility and in love.

3. *Teresa's Visions and John's Teaching*

The question remains as to whether or not Teresa's account of her visions and John's teaching about them exist in some form of contradiction to each other. It is tempting to conclude that they do, if only because so much of what Teresa records should, according to the younger Carmelite friar, have been discounted by her. But by the logic of John's analysis it was not Teresa who would have been at fault for questioning the powers of discernment of her superiors, but her confessors and spiritual directors. These men wasted far too much time trying to ascertain whether her visions were of God, the devil or her own deluded mind, instead of advising her plain and simple that she should take no notice of them and concentrate on

emptying her mind of all encumbrances to God's gift of unitive prayer.

But there is another, more helpful and appropriate way of looking at the differences between them, and here I return to where I began, with gender and genre. In terms of gender, I mean that a woman religious writing about her own visionary experiences in an ecclesiastical culture in which women were forbidden to teach and in an age marked by several *causes célèbres* involving nuns who acquired followers and who subsequently confessed to being deluded or having made a pact with Satan, was treading a dangerous path and was open to serious accusations. There were scandals in Spain throughout the sixteenth century involving women who had assumed teaching and leadership roles in the various spiritual movements grouped together, rather unhelpfully, as Illuminism.[25] The term *alumbrados* ("enlightened" or "illumined ones") was coined by their accusers. Our knowledge of their beliefs and practices depends largely on the propositions the Inquisition formulated against them. The first *alumbrados* were arrested in Toledo in 1524, and the following year the Inquisitor General Manrique issued an Edict of Faith which defined and condemned their beliefs. In broad terms, the *alumbrados* were accused of denying the value of the external practices of the Church, such as the cult of saints, and of privileging mental over vocal prayer. In some cases this led to a belief in abandoning oneself to the divine will and reaching a state of perfection in which temptations were not to be resisted. The most famous case of a fraudulent nun in Teresa's time was that of the Franciscan Sor Magdalena de la Cruz (1487–1560), who after attracting a great following confessed in 1543 to hypocrisy and demonic possession, and was sentenced by the Inquisition to life imprisonment in a convent of her religious order.[26]

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[25] For a fuller account see, for example, Alastair Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alumbrados* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1992); Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, "Negotiating Sanctity: Holy Women in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Church History* 64 (1995): 373–88; Pere Santonja, *La herejía de los alumbrados y la espiritualidad en la España del siglo xvi, Inquisición y sociedad* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001).

[26] Magdalena de la Cruz was prioress of the Franciscan convent of Santa Isabel de los Ángeles, Córdoba, and had been considered to possess the gift of prophecy. Some of her supporters were highly placed, and included Alonso Manrique, Inquisitor General from 1523–38, and the Franciscan spiritual writer Francisco de Osuna

Teresa was well educated, but had no theological training. She wrote her *Vida*, her spiritual autobiography, acting under obedience to her confessor, in order to provide an honest account of her inner life so that others appropriately qualified could come to a judgment about it. John, by contrast, had studied at the University of Salamanca, although after completing four years of philosophy and one year of theology he had abandoned academic studies in order to found the first Discalced Carmelite house for men. His intellectual formation, in an Aristotelian-Thomist mould, and his authority as a priest, confessor, and spiritual director gave him the theological principles and analytical tools with which he could approach the discernment of visions and the position from which he could articulate his conclusions. So he was writing from the other end, from the point of view of an experienced director of souls and a mystic himself, stepping back from the phenomena in order to analyse them in terms of their place on the road to union. His principal concerns were twofold: that directors should not hamper the souls in their charge by forcing them to restrict their prayer life to meditation; and that souls should not become attached to practices and experiences which stand in the way of God's direct communication. He was therefore bound to conclude that the process of detachment from everything creaturely, visions included, must be completed before the soul is capable of receiving the greatest of all divine gifts in this life, union with the Creator.

In terms of genre, Teresa was writing as clear and honest a narrative of her spiritual life until the early 1560s as she could, and using a first-person voice to do so. If she had a model in mind, it is likely to have been the *Confessions* of Augustine, the influence of which on her she describes in *Vida* 9.7–8.[27] When it comes to her visions, she acknowledges how difficult they are to describe but produces some of her most memorable analogies in doing so. Descriptions are often followed by the effect the vision had on her, by an account of how her confessors reacted, and by passages of prayer and praise addressed to God. But the *Vida* is in many ways a transitional work. It is the record of a life in progress, written at a point when she did

(1492–1540), whose *Tercer abecedario espiritual* (1527), with its teaching on *recogimiento* (recollection) had such a powerful effect on the young Teresa (see *Vida* 4.1).

[27] Teresa would have read this work in the translation by Fray Sebastiano Toscano (Salamanca, 1554).

not understand her experiences and worse still, was caught on the horns of a painful dilemma.

Teresa's most mature teaching on prayer is found in the *Moradas*, some fifteen years later, where her conclusions mirror those of John more closely. For example, she advises her readers that "jamás le supliquéis [a Dios] ni deséis que os lleve por este camino, aunque os parezca muy bueno" (6.15: never ask him [God] to lead you by this road, even if it seems to you a very good one). She states this with even greater conviction in *Fundaciones*:

> En lo que está la suma perfeción claro está que no es en regalos interiores ni en grandes arrobamientos ni visiones ni en espíritu de profecía, sino en estar nuestra voluntad tan conforme con la de Dios, que ninguna cosa entendamos que quiere, que no la queremos con toda nuestra voluntad, y tan alegremente tomemos lo sabroso como lo amargo, entendiendo que lo quiere su Majestad (5.10).
>
> As far as the highest perfection goes, it clearly does not lie in inward consolations or great trances or visions or in the spirit of prophecy, but in our will being so in conformity with God's that we wish with our whole will anything we understand him to will, and that we accept what is delightful as joyfully as we do what is bitter, understanding that his Majesty wills it.

John's writing follows a different model. The genre of his prose works is a hybrid one: they take the form of commentaries on three of his major poems, but they are also ascetic, devotional, and mystical treatises, and contain lengthy passages of biblical exposition. They are written in a third person voice and rigorously exclude almost all personal comment. They use his training in scholastic philosophy and theology to analyse the whole of the spiritual journey, from the first stirrings of God in the soul to the foretaste of union in this life, realized only fully in the beatific vision hereafter. Unlike Teresa, he has no personal narrative to tell; he has stepped back from the record of the experiences themselves to categorise them and to subject them to a theological analysis rooted in the epistemological and ontological categories he has inherited. If this leads him to the negative conclusion that visions are to be shunned and that there is no need to engage in any kind of discernment of their origins, we must remember that whenever he negates it is only ever in order to affirm something greater—in this case, mystical union beyond all word and image. His own experience finds its most eloquent voice in his greatest lyrical poems, which are intensely

sensuous, mysterious, rich in image, and expressed in a first-person voice. They provide the affirmative counterpart to the theology of his commentaries; creaturely works, yet witnesses to the encounter with the divine.

4. *Conclusion*

John's works proved in the end to be more controversial than Teresa's, which may explain their relatively late appearance in print and his much later canonization. Teresa's were frequently published in Spanish and translated into the major European languages, perhaps because her *Vida* tells such a compelling personal story.[28] But it is delightfully ironic, for those of us who dislike the reductionist attitude of some modern writers to earlier historical periods, to reflect on the fact that it was the woman Teresa's subjective account of her mystical experiences which gained the approval of the leading theologians of the day and reached a much wider audience and rather sooner than the man John's objective analysis of such states ever did. In trying to set down her understanding of her visionary experiences, Teresa has to struggle with the issue of discernment in a way John does not. Whereas her *Vida* gives a chronological account of her experiences and the often negative reactions of her advisers and confessors to their authenticity, John comes at the question from a different perspective. His prose commentaries may trace the whole spiritual journey from the purgative through the illuminative

[28] On first editions, see note 4, above. Teresa's complete works were first translated into English by R.H. (Abraham Woodhead), *The Works of the Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus* (London, 1675). The *Vida* had already appeared in English, as *The lyf of the Mother Teresa of Jesus*, trans. "W.M." (probably the English Jesuit Michael Walpole; Antwerp, 1611), and as *The Flaming Hart: or the Life of the Glorious S. Teresa*, by "M.T" (Tobie Matthew; Antwerp, 1642). Teresa's works were familiar to Richard Crashaw (1612–49), who dedicated three poems to her. The first French translation was that of Jean de Brétigny, *Les trois livres de la Mère Thérèse*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1601); for the history of her early translation into French, see Alphonse Vermeylen, *Sainte Thérèse en France au XVIIe siècle (1600–1660)* (Leuven: Bibliothèque de l'Université, Bureau du recueil, 1958).

John of the Cross's works did not appear in English until 1864: *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, translated by David Lewis, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864); for the subsequent translation history, see Thompson, *St John of the Cross*, 6–8. The first French translation appeared in Paris, 1622 and the first Italian one in Rome, 1627.

to the unitive state, but everything he writes about progress through the first two stages is interpreted in the light of the third. Teresa writes as one who is *in via* and cannot yet assess the place her experiences have in the journey as a whole, while John has mapped it out having reached the destination, and can look back at all the twists and turns along the way, to point out which will prove to be deceptive and which properly form part of the road to union with the divine.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTICIPATING IN THE DIVINE: VISIONS AND ECSTASIES IN A FLORENTINE CONVENT

CLARE COPELAND

On 27 May 1584 a sixteen-year old girl was carried from her sick bed in the Carmelite convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli to the convent's chapel where "with great fervour and tears" she made her profession as a nun.[1] The new Sr Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (1566–1607), considered by doctors to be on the verge of death, was carefully taken back to bed. There, left alone, she had her first apparently mystical experience within the convent enclosure.[2] Each morning for the next forty days, she fell into rapture after receiving communion, typically for around two hours at a time.[3] Maria Maddalena spent the remaining twenty-five years of her life within the convent's strict enclosure, during which time she claimed to experience visions, raptures, and ecstasies, some of which lasted for hours and even days at a time.[4] Her supposed experiences included being

[1] The girl professed "con gran fervore e lacrime," according to Suor Vangelista del Giocondo: Processus 767, Cong. Riti, Archivio Segreto Vaticano [henceforth, P767], 104–5. On her sickness, see Claudio Catena, "Le malattie di S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi," *Carmelus* 16 (1969): 70–141. The convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli was home to approximately eighty nuns.

[2] Transcriptions of her mystical experiences have been published: Fulvio Nardoni, ed., *Tutte le opera di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi*, 7 vols. (Florence: Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1960–66). These comprise: vol. 1, *I quaranta giorni*, ed. Ermanno del SS. Sacramento (1960); vol. 2, *I colloqui I*, ed. Claudio Catena (1961); vol. 3, *I colloqui II*, ed. Claudio Catena (1963); vol. 4, *Revelatione e intelligentie*, ed. Pelagio Visentin (1964); vol. 5, *La probatione I*, ed. Giuliano Agresti (1965); vol. 6, *La probatione II*, ed. Giuliano Agresti (1965); vol. 7, *La renovatione della Chiesa*, ed. Fausto Vallainc (1966). For an English translation of some of these texts, see Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *Selected Revelations*, trans. and intro. Armando Maggi (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000). For a recent critical edition of Maria Maddalena's correspondence, see Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *"Costretta dalla dolce verità, scrivo": L'epistolario completo*, ed. Chiara Vasciaveo (Florence: Nerbini, 2007).

[3] *I quaranta giorni*, 240.

[4] For a modern biography of Maria Maddalena, see Bruno Secondin, *Santa Maria*

mystically married to Christ, reliving the passion, and receiving the stigmata (invisibly). She was believed to have seen souls in purgatory and heaven, and to be able to prophesy. She was also attributed with freeing people considered possessed by demons. During a five-year period of temptation she herself was particularly plagued by demons which took on monstrous forms and appeared to attack her physically.

The experiences that Maria Maddalena claimed inevitably raised the question as to their origins: was she divinely inspired, diabolically deceived, or deceiving herself and/or others? If divinely inspired then she was receiving "treasures" for the Church, as her biographer would later claim.[5] But if deceived or deceiving, her activities threatened the stability of her whole convent community and attacked the very authority of the Catholic Church's *magisterium*.[6] In the post-Reformation era in which the Catholic Church faced challenges concerning the cult of saints and the broader identification of holiness, doubts about the origins of these types of supernatural experiences were given extra potency.[7] Discernment was difficult, not least because those divinely inspired and those possessed by demons might engage in very similar behaviour.[8]

Maddalena de' Pazzi: Esperienza e dottrina, 2nd ed. (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitani, 2007). Aquinas noted that "ecstasy means simply a going out of oneself by being placed outside one's proper order while rapture denotes a certain violence in addition" (*Summa theologica* II.II q. 175 art. 2; I.II q. 28 art. 3). Maria Maddalena's visions and ecstasies corresponded variously to the corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual visions outlined in Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Taylor, 2 vols. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), vol. 1, bk. 2, 185–98.

[5] Maria Maddalena's first biographer noted that she was ordered to recount what she saw and understood "in order not to lose so many heavenly treasures" (*per non lasciar perdere tanti tesori celesti*). Vincenzo Puccini, *Vita della Madre Suor Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi* (Florence, 1609) [henceforth, *Vita*], 18.

[6] For examples of the disruption caused by supposed possessions within convents, especially group possessions, see Jeffrey Watt, *The Scourge of Demons: Possession, Lust, and Witchcraft in a Seventeenth-Century Italian Convent* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009); and Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), esp. 233–64.

[7] Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 77–78, 87–78, 210–12.

[8] Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990), 114–19. See also David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d'Otranto* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), 249–50.

By the late sixteenth century, ecclesiastical authorities in Italy (as well as in Spain) were increasingly concerned by women in particular claiming visions and insights directly from God.[9] At exactly the time when Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi claimed divine ecstasies and visions, a Neapolitan tertiary, Alfonsina Rispola (born ca. 1553), was subjected to a prolonged investigation for claiming similar experiences. She was first investigated by local inquisitors in 1581, accused of "simulating sanctity" (*simulare santità*). The charge was significant because it numbered wilful simulation, hypocrisy, and pride amongst the possible non-divine causes of the experiences she claimed.[10] She was kept imprisoned for twelve years whilst her experiences were debated, and although Roman representatives of the Holy Office appeared to believe that her experiences were not diabolical, they nevertheless recommended that she be kept under house arrest. Maria Maddalena's claims came, therefore, at a time when concerns about demonic causes and deceptive visionary women were high.

Yet, fearful as the ecclesiastical authorities might have been about mystical experiences, they could not, and did not, dismiss them entirely.[11] Indeed, the ranks of canonized saints boasted a wealth of mystics—women amongst them—who had not only been

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[9] Amongst the considerable literature on this, see: Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 431–64; and Adriano Prosperi, "Dalle 'divine madri' ai 'padri spirituali,'" in *Women and Men in Spiritual Culture, XIV–XVII Centuries: A Meeting of South and North*, ed. Elisja Schulte van Kessel (The Hague: Netherlands Government Publishing Office, 1986), 71–90; Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991); Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2001); and Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 180–97. On Spain, see Andrew Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, and the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[10] Giovanni Romeo, "Una 'simulatrice di santità' a Napoli nel '500: Alfonsina Rispola," *Campania sacra* 8–9 (1977–78): 159–218, here at 159. See also Jean-Michel Sallmann, "La sainteté mystique féminine a Naples au tournant des XVIe et XVIIe siècles," in *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale*, ed. Sofia Boesch Gajano and Lucia Sebastiani (L'Aquila and Rome: Japadre Editore, 1984), 692–97; Jean-Michel Sallmann, *Naples et ses saints à l'àge baroque (1540–1750)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994), 178–86.

[11] Stephen Haliczer has stressed this point in his study of women mystics in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, some of whom were "approved" and some of whom were not. Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

tolerated but were openly approved and celebrated. Amongst them, Catherine of Siena (1347–80), Gertrude of Helfta (d. 1302), and Bridget of Sweden (1303–73) all enjoyed strong cults in Italy in the sixteenth century, particularly amongst nuns.[12] Thus, even though no women were canonized in the sixteenth century, the woman mystic nevertheless endured as a model of holiness amongst the Catholic faithful.[13] Saints such as these not only inspired imitation, but also provided persuasive precedents for the mystics of future generations, as the first biographer of Teresa of Avila (1515–82) must have realized when choosing to make repeated comparisons between his subject and Saint Gertrude.[14]

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's experiences thus called for the discernment of spirits in a period when the Church authorities and the writers of confessor manuals were developing their scepticism towards women claiming visions, and yet could not deny the importance of true visions. In this context, discernment was inevitably an activity for male clerics, confessors above all, who were always going to examine Maria Maddalena's experiences. But clergymen were not the only people to engage with would-be mystics and in Maria Maddalena's case, her life within the convent enclosure also raised questions for her fellow nuns: how were *they* to assess her claims, and how might they incorporate a visionary within the life of their community?

1. *Discerning Holiness within the Convent*

When Maria Maddalena first went into rapture on the day of her profession, she was observed only by her fellow nuns who became

[12] On the "mystical invasion" of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, see André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 407–12. On Bridget of Sweden's influence, see Auke Jelsma, "The Appreciation of Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373) in the 15th Century," in Van Kessel, *Women and Men in Spiritual Culture*, 163–75.

[13] Sara F. Matthews Grieco, "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabrielle Zarri (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), 159–75. For more on the importance of the saints as models for imitation, see Jan Machielsen's contribution to this volume, esp. 133–41.

[14] Francisco de Ribera, *La vida de la Madre Teresa de Jesús* (Salamanca, 1590). On the comparison with Gertude, see Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy*, 42–44. For another example, see Van Hyning below, 156–57.

the first to engage in a process of discerning the inspiration behind her remarkable behaviour. The community seems to have been particularly receptive towards charismatic spirituality and was encouraged in this by preachers with ties to the heritage of Girolamo Savonarola.[15] Indeed, Anna Scattigno has argued that the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli were intent on promoting an image of Maria Maddalena in which it was their community that was credited with allowing her divine gifts to flourish precisely because they were well disposed to welcome them.[16] Yet, the records of Maria Maddalena's early raptures suggest that the nuns did not simply accept their young novice's behaviour unthinkingly, enthusiastic though they might have been. Certainly they were encouraged by the virtue Maria Maddalena had already exhibited, but the nuns were still drawn into a process of discernment relating to her visionary claims, not least because as a novice she was still in formation and under the observation of a strict novice mistress.[17]

The nuns' discernment initially seems to have focused on the physical transformation that their sister underwent.[18] Some fifteen years later, it was this aspect of Maria Maddalena's first ecstasy that Sr Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia (d. 1627) still recalled vividly:

> The infirmary sister, not having needed to do anything for an hour, and being attentive and hearing that she [Maria Maddalena] wasn't coughing, when it was unusual for her to be more than the space of an *Ave Maria* without coughing, went to admire this. And so, taking herself, very quietly she entered the room and, raising the curtains, found she was deeply reposed in her centre, that is, in God. She was alienated completely from her external senses and [was] rapt in God. She had a beautiful face with skin flushed red and she kept her eyes

[15] Alessandro Capocchi (d. 1581) was a particularly influential preacher in this regard. See Tamar Herzig, *Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 124.

[16] Anna Scattigno, "Una communità testimone: Il monastero di Santa Maria degli Angeli e la costruzione di un modello di professione religiosa," in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra Rinascimento e Barocco*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2005), 175–204, esp. 181.

[17] The virtues, especially humility, had long been considered significant indicators of the presence of the Holy Spirit. See for example, Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, bk. 1, ch. 1: "That soul, which is full of God's Holy Spirit, has for proof thereof most evident signs, to wit, the other virtues, and especially humility."

[18] On the medieval importance of reading the physical signs of the body, see Nancy Caciola, "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000): 268–306.

> fixed on the crucifix [on the wall]. A majesty and a great amount of grace shone in that face so that it seemed as though it could never be she herself, who had become gaunt and pale through sickness. Seeing this, the infirmary sister immediately made it known to the Mother Prioress, whereby she, with some other nuns, came to the room. And all the sisters came there to visit, entering one at a time into the room, and they received very great consolation.[19]

It was on "seeing this," the majesty of a face shining with "grace," that the infirmarian first rushed to gather her fellow nuns, thereby turning the event into a public spectacle within the convent [see Figure 3.1]. Maria Maddalena's personal experience swiftly became "social" because her transformation attracted attention and demanded interpretation.[20] Such physical wonders were traditional indicators: Christ's transfiguration had, after all, been seen when his face shone with excessive—supernatural—brightness (Matthew 17:2).[21] Teresa of Avila, for instance, was persuaded of the divine nature of her vision by the beauty and brightness of what she saw.[22] For the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli, however, it was the dazzling light of their sister whilst *she* was in rapture that offered a captivating sign of divine favour.

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[19] [Suor Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia,] "Breve ragguaglio," in *I quaranta giorni* [henceforth, "Breve"], 92–93. "E stata l'infermiera circa un'hora senza dargli fastidio, stando attenta e sentendo che non tossiva, che pure no' soleva stare per spatio di una Ave Maria senza tossire, stava ammirata di tal cosa; e così, prendendo animo, pian piano entrò in camera, e alzando le cortine, trovò che ben si riposava nel suo centro, cioè in Dio, però che era alienata in tutto e per tutto da sensi esteriori, e rapita in Dio. Haveva fatto una faccia bellissima, con le carne vermiglie, e teneva li occhi fissi al Crucifisso. Risplendeva in quel' volto una Maiestà e gratia tanto grande, che no' pareva mai lei stessa, quale per l'infermità era divenuta macilenta, e smorta. Vedendo questo l'infermiera lo fece subito noto alla Madre Priora, onde essa co' l'altre Madre andorno in camera. E tutte le Suore l'andorno a visitare, entrando una per volta in camera, e ricevemmo grandissima consolatione."

[20] William Christian has described apparitions as "social visions" precisely because "they attract immediate public attention and call for some sort of verification." William Christian, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), 4.

[21] Aquinas, *Summa theologica* III q. 45, art. 1–2. Prospero Lambertini noted that the brightness of Christ's face had differed in kind and nature from natural brightness, noting an "overflowing of the brightness and inward light of the soul": Prospero Lambertini, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione* (Bologna, 1734–38), III.49.4. The association between light and divinity is clear in John 1:9 in which Christ, the Word, is "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (Authorised King James Version).

[22] See Colin Thompson above, 60.

Figure 3.1. Abraham van Diepenbeeck, *Vita seraphicae virginis S. Mariae Magdalenae de Pazzis, Florentinae ordinis B.V.M. de Monte Carmelo iconibus expressa* (Antwerp, 1670), image 12. Reproduced with permission from the Bibliotheca Carmelitana, Rome.

Indeed, Maria Maddalena's physical transformation was considered more marked because she was deemed at the time to be on the verge of death. Sickness was considered to be a possible natural cause for ecstasies and visions, and was therefore typically treated

with caution by theologians and medical practitioners.[23] This was particularly true when the recipient of visions was delirious or suffering from melancholy, but also when someone appeared to emerge from an ecstasy weary, pale, and forgetful. Maria Maddalena's transformation, however, was striking because "it seemed as though it could never be she herself, who had become gaunt and pale through sickness." When the nun appeared pale and weary after rapture, this was read as a return to her usual condition rather than the result of what she had undergone.

Throughout the so-called "quaranta giorni" (forty days) of May–June 1584 when the young nun appeared to fall into rapture every day, the nuns were astonished by what their own senses perceived. Several of the nuns were charged with keeping an account of what happened to their sister. It reveals a fascination not only with what Maria Maddalena did and said, but *how* she behaved and spoke. On 12 June 1584 (the seventeenth day), for instance, their sister "seemed to become mad" from an "impetus of love" and ran around the room shouting loudly:

> And she smiled a certain beautiful smile, so sweet and joyful that it was a consolation to see it; yet that shouting of hers, "Love, love!" caused great terror, though not dismay. For a while she sat down, with her eyes fixed on the said crucifix, seeming to be in a great excess of mind.[24]

As the ecstasy came to an end, the nuns keeping this record noted that she returned to them in a bodily form as though nothing had happened, which "seemed a wonder to us."[25] Here the nuns absorbed the outward signs that they saw and transformed them into inward signs based on the effect that these had on *them* as much as on their sister. Maria Maddalena did not simply smile, but—in their description—smiled beautifully. The drama of what was happening

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[23] See Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovsky, "Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–48, esp. 11–13.

[24] *I quaranta giorni*, 136. "In tal' dì gli venne un'impeto tanto grande d'amore che pareva impazzita, [. . .] e faceva un'certo bel'riso tanto dolce e allegro che era una consolatione a sentirla e ancora dava gran'terrore, quel'suo gridare Amore, amore, ma'non già spavento. Si posava al quanto con li occhi fissi al detto Crocifisso, parendo in grande eccesso di mente."

[25] *I quaranta giorni*, 140. "Poi si riebbe, e ritornò come non havessi mai havuto cosa nessuna, che ci pareva una maraviglia."

was crucial to how the nuns assessed their sister. Though captivated and even terrified, they had no sense of disquiet. Maria Maddalena's unusual behaviour, dramatic movements, and loud shouts might well have appeared disorderly or improper—and thus diabolical in origin.[26] The nuns, however, presented the wonder of Maria Maddalena's extreme behaviour alongside their own discernment, captured by their inward responses.

But Maria Maddalena's behaviour was not always as consoling to the nuns. For five years between 1585 and 1590, the Carmelite nun endured what she understood to be a "probation" during which she was "surrounded by a multitude of demons and afflicted by their great and horrible temptations."[27] She saw the devil constantly, not with her bodily eye but with the eye of her mind.[28] Demons assaulted her daily, she claimed, attacking her both physically and internally. They would push her down the stairs, making her fall down. At other times, "in the guise of vipers," they wrapped themselves around her body and bit into her flesh.[29] Mentally, the devil tried to persuade her that there was no God and no afterlife, and thus her mortifications were all in vain.

Maria Maddalena's anguished physical responses to her supposed battles with demons led the nuns in their discernment, just as her beauty had inspired their discernment of her other experiences. Maria Maddalena was overtaken by affliction and desolation when demons attacked her. For the nuns, witnessing their sister's fear and

[26] Prospero Lambertini later cited Maria Maddalena's example to demonstrate that not all unusual actions were necessarily of diabolical origin, but only those that were "indecent, and especially immodest." Lambertini, *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, III.49.10.

[27] *La probatione I*, 32. "Circundata da moltitudine di Demoni e afflitta dalle lor grande e orribil tentatione." On these afflictions, see Armando Maggi, *Uttering the Word: The Mystical Performances of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, a Renaissance Visionary* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 119–37.

[28] *La probatione I*, 74. "Tanto interviene a lei della vista del'Demonio, che di continuo con l'occhio della mente ha tal vista senza partirsegli mai, volendo Iddio che la patisca in tal modo."

[29] *La probatione I*, 33–34. "Bene spesso la gettavono giù per le scale, la battevano per terra, e tal volta a guisa di vipere velenose se gli avvoggevono alle carne mordendola con gran pena sua, in modo tale che da tutte le bande era circundata di aflitione, pene e travagli."

violence prompted feelings of "compassione" (compassion or pity).[30] Even when Maria Maddalena could not see demons, she claimed she could hear them and reacted physically. On 28 April 1585, for example, the nuns saw their novice shaking and crying to such an extent that they "suspected that the devil himself was hitting her like St Anthony."[31] Maria Maddalena later explained that she had not been beaten but, rather, had heard blaspheming and had seen offences committed against God. She corrected the comparison with St Anthony, but the written account still presented her painful ordeal as an example of her holy imitation of the saints. The nuns read her encounters with the devil as indications not of diabolical delusion, but of holy fortitude, a well-established motif in the lives of medieval saints, amongst them Catherine of Siena.[32] Enduring these sorts of encounters even provided an opportunity to display a holiness that could draw close to martyrdom.[33]

In discerning both the divine and the demonic, Maria Maddalena's sisters placed considerable importance on their own inward reactions to her *physical* manifestations of rapture and ecstasy. Anna Scattigno has rightly stressed that the community of Santa Maria degli Angeli could testify to and adopt Maria Maddalena's holiness as eye-witnesses and because they gained from her teaching, principally by responding to her vision of a reformed monastic life.[34] But

[30] On 1 September 1586, the nuns reported that Maria Maddalena's gestures indicated that the devil was sawing her body to pieces, and that it caused "compassione" to see and hear her. *La probatione I*, 37.

[31] *I colloqui II*, 16. "Gli domandammo poi nel'colloquio quello che l'haveva quando si riscoteva a quel modo in tutta le persona, e che piangeva così forte che dubitamo noi la non fussi battuta dal'Demonio come Santo Antonio, che non restava di dire: o bone Jesu, mettendo urla, con un gran pianto, riscotendosi come se fussi battuta." On perceptions of Anthony in the early modern period, see Stuart Clark below, 293–304.

[32] Catherine's *vita* recorded the devil trying to set fire to her hair: Raymund of Capua, *The Life of St Catherine of Siena*, trans. George Lamb (London: Harvill Press, 1960), esp. 93 and 114–15.

[33] Ulrike Strasser, "Clara Hortulana of Embach or How to Suffer Martyrdom in the Cloister," in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Wyhe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 39–57. Strasser presents an example of how death apparently at the hands of the devil could make Christian martyrdom available even to enclosed nuns.

[34] Anna Scattigno, "Un commento alla regola carmelitana: Gli 'Ammaestramenti' di Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi," in *Il monachesimo femminile in Italia dall' alto medioevo al secolo XVII a confronto con l'oggi*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Verona: Gabrielli Editori, 1997), 283–302; and Scattigno, "Una communità," esp. 202–3.

they could also do this because they became part of her mystical experiences. Even without having to follow Maria Maddalena's (model) example, the nuns' own feelings and experiences were intertwined with their sister's.

Amongst those nuns engaged in the process of discernment, most significant of all were the prioress and the young nun's novice mistress. Alison Weber has presented how Teresa of Avila, in drawing up a set of constitutions for her Discalced Carmelite communities in 1567, daringly gave each prioress an "independent role as spiritual advisor," deeming them capable of discernment on account of their office.[35] According to article 41 of the 1567 constitutions, nuns were to meet with their prioress monthly in order to give an account of their prayer life and to receive spiritual guidance. It was, as Weber notes, a challenge to Jean Gerson's idea of discernment as a gift conceded to men to be exercised over women. Challenging enough, indeed, that the article was subtly adapted for the 1581 edition of the constitutions and instead encouraged the nun herself to engage in self-discernment.

Maria Maddalena herself appears to have shown great trust in her convent community, perhaps most strikingly in an incident in October 1587 when she specifically turned to her prioress for counsel of the type Teresa might have envisaged. For some months Maria Maddalena had been plagued with fears that the particular austere life she was leading was not the will of God, despite having gained approval from the convent's confessor.[36] Then, on the vigil of the feast of St Ursula, she had a vision in which two nuns appeared to her, one dressed in black and one in white [see cover image]. The two nuns told her that her way of life was indeed offending God and that by persevering with it she would fall out of grace. Maria Maddalena was left, in the words of a contemporary account, "greatly afflicted and confused" and turned to the prioress for advice.[37] She

[35] Alison Weber, "Spiritual Administration: Gender and Discernment in the Carmelite Reform," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31 (2000): 123–46, esp. 129–31.

[36] Her way of life included going about barefooted (i.e., discalced) and wearing only one tunic, whether it was winter or summer.

[37] *La probatione I*, 117. "Dico che ne patisce battaglie grandissime; e fra l'altre la vigilia di Santa Orsola, alli 20 del'suddetto mese [ottobre], il'Demonio gli apparve pigliando forma di 2 monache, una vestita di bianco e l'altra di bigio, e comminciogli a parlare in questo modo dicendogli come il'suo vivere non era punto grato a Dio, anzi che lei l'offendeva a tenere questa vita, e che se la perseverava in essa cadreb-

begged for the prioress's prayers and to be told what God wanted her to do. The prioress comforted her and told her that she must continue along the path she had started down, "holding it as certain that it had been a deception caused by the devil to remove her from what is right."[38] And in ecstasy a few days later, Maria Maddalena herself felt assured of this.

According to this reading the devil had been transformed into a metaphorical angel of light in order to trick Maria Maddalena into despair, rather than seducing her with power. And just as Teresa had trusted the prioresses of the Discalced Carmelite convents to discern the origins of their daughters' spiritual experiences, so Maria Maddalena also gave responsibility to her woman superior in place of her male confessors.[39] Within the convent enclosure, spiritual direction and the discernment of spirits were first and foremost a matter for the women living there. Maria Maddalena's personal experiences became public experiences to be discerned publicly, and in the process, they also became experiences to be shared by her monastic community.

2. *Narrating Mysticism*

Word of Maria Maddalena's frequent raptures in May 1584 quickly reached the ears of the convent's confessor, Agostino Campi (d. 1591), who commanded that "through obedience she refer everything in her life and particularly the raptures that occurred and that which she understood from God and was revealed to her" to Sr

be in disgratia di Dio. E molte altre cose gli disse, che per brevità le lasso, tanto che la poverina rimase molto aflitta e confusa; e riferendo il'tutto alla m[adre] priora, la pregò che facessi oratione per lei e che gli dicessi quel tanto che il'Signore la spirava che dovessi fare. Alle quale cose la m[adre] priora la confortò e inanimò a dovere seguire nella vita incominciata, tenendo per certo che quello era stato inganno del'Demonio per rimuoverla dal'bene."

[38] The prioress's advice mimicked that of Ignatius of Loyola, who had taught that during periods of desolation it was advisable not to change one's mind about a decision (Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 318–21). In the cover image, the devil's deception is portrayed visually to the viewer (but not Maria Maddalena) by showing the false nuns with a tail and hooves. A nun—perhaps the prioress—looks on. On visual depictions of discernment see Stuart Clark, "Afterword," below.

[39] The transcription of the incident (see n. 35) and the account in Puccini's biography (*Vita*, 75) both note that she conferred with the prioress who comforted and advised her, making no mention of her confessor.

Vangelista del Giocondo (then novice-mistress) and Sr Maria Maddalena Mori.[40] Testifying for Maria Maddalena's beatification over twenty years later, Vangelista recalled how Maria Maddalena greeted news of her confessor's command with tears but nevertheless submitted in obedience to her monastic superiors and her confessor.[41] Her behaviour demonstrated the crucial holy virtues of humility and obedience that pointed away from diabolical delusion.[42] Thus the two nuns started to interview Maria Maddalena after each of her raptures ended, with Sisters Veronica Alessandri and Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia acting as scribes.[43] They asked her about both what she had seen and what she had understood, writing up the account in the first person as though Maria Maddalena herself was the author.

Not only were Maria Maddalena's sisters the first to interpret her experiences, but as scribes they were also in a position to shape what male clerical assessors would base their judgment on.[44] In an afterword to *I quaranta giorni*, Maria Maddalena Mori remarked on Campi's decision to receive an account of the visions second-hand:

> The Father Confessor imposed on her by holy obedience that she should confer these her Revelations to the said Sr Veronica, her Companion, having a great familiarity with her on account of being in the Noviciate together; the Father said that he meant to see if she was deceived, not caring that she should tell him about it herself in order not to embarrass her. And, moreover, so as not to have to spend too much time here in [her] room to Confess her, since she was still sick and in Bed.[45]

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[40] P767, 128. "Per obbedienza referissi tutto cio che in vita sua et particularmente ne i rapti gl'occurreva et che da Dio intendeva et gl'era revelato à me et a suor Maria Maddalena Mori." Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia specified that the confessor ordered this to happen daily (P767, 245).

[41] P767, 128. "gran' repugnanza."

[42] Ignatius of Loyola emphasized that the devil, when deceiving the just soul, wants that his persuasions are kept secret and is aggrieved when they are revealed either to a good confessor or to another spiritual person who knows his deceits (*Spiritual Exercises*, para. 326). For Jean Gerson, not submitting to a superior in these cases was a sign of pride and, therefore, of demonic delusion.

[43] P767, 128. Vangelista admitted that she did not act as a scribe because she was not good at writing and was often too busy with her other responsibilities.

[44] On the "hagiographical" nature of the first part of *I colloqui*, see Maggi, *Uttering the Word*, 66–69.

[45] *I quaranta giorni*, 241. "Onde il Padre Confessoro per santa obedientia, gli impose che conferissi queste sua Revelatione con la detta Suor Veronica [Alessandri]

Whilst this account suggests that Campi was not completely lacking in concern that Maria Maddalena might be deceived, his decision to stand back from the recording process was a curious one. Had he truly considered Maria Maddalena's experiences to be diabolical or fake—and thus a danger for the whole community—he would surely not have employed her sisters in a task that engaged them so intensely with their consorella in "rapture." Conversely, had he been enthusiastic about Maria Maddalena as a divine visionary, he might well have been eager to forge a stronger collaborative confessor–visionary partnership of the type seen with other mystic women of this period and earlier, such as Catherine of Siena or Angela of Foligno.[46]

Without speculating on the motive that lay behind Campi's decision, we can at least consider that the result may have been mutually beneficial to all parties. Campi could allow events to continue whilst avoiding personal incrimination should the Inquisition become interested, as well as reducing the likelihood of concern about any overly intimate relationship. The nuns, meanwhile, revelled in their unique position to access Maria Maddalena's experiences as they were happening and could justify the extraordinary records they kept by their monastic vow of obedience.

As Maria Maddalena's raptures continued unabated over the course of May and June 1584, the nuns took on the task of trying to record them as they unfolded before their eyes, rather than as purely retrospective accounts. The records changed to incorporate the

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suo Compagna, havendo con lei gran'familiarità per esser insieme in Novitiato; gli disse il detto Padre che faceva per vedere se vi era inganno, nè si curando che da se lo dicessi a lui per no' farla vergogniare. Et ancora per non havere a'star'tanto qui in camera, a'Confessarla, però che era inferma e stava tuttavia in Letto." The text is placed between an ecstasy on 6 July 1584 and another on 11 July; it may have been added in the process of producing a fair copy of the manuscript, the letter for which is dated October 1584.

[46] See esp. John Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006); and Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2005), esp. 46–75. Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy*, 71–72 stresses the "decisive importance" of a well-informed confessor for making or breaking a visionary's reputation. On Angela of Foligno and the records kepts by her confessor, Arnaldo, see Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, trans. and intro. Paul Lachance (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993); and Aviad Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 46–50.

impressions and descriptions of the nuns witnessing the events, supplemented by details from the conversations they had with their sister later. From the sixteenth day (11 June 1584), comments were included to link Maria Maddalena's words in the first person with a note in the third person of what she was doing, how she was speaking, or what she "understood."

To describe Maria Maddalena's appearance, her actions, and the manner of her speech clearly involved a degree of interpretation and betrayed an obvious belief in the origin of her experiences. On 11 June 1584, for instance, Maria Maddalena's shining face was described as "a face very bright with pure love."[47] Later that same day, it was noted that she was "speaking words filled with love and also filled with compassion." Fuller descriptions of Maria Maddalena's voice, appearance, and actions in this way necessarily identified an inspiration behind what was visible or audible, reflecting their own discernment of spirits. The scribes' descriptions were no doubt influenced by the examples of various saints and the call to imitate them. This seems to have been the case a few months later, on 15 April 1585, when it was specifically said that the young nun "seemed like St Catherine of Siena."[48]

Indeed, as the nuns extended the records they kept to include more on *how* Maria Maddalena acted as well as *what* she did, their texts consolidated the view that Maria Maddalena's experiences were public dramas that were shared by the convent community, rather than personal, private encounters. The initial technique used at the start of *I quaranta giorni* left the responsibility for the records with only a few nuns. As the raptures became longer and more complex, the nuns, anxious to note everything, felt they were missing details: "She spoke of many things that we have not been able to recall so precisely."[49] Adding descriptions of the performative aspect had only made the task of narrating the raptures much more difficult.

A new strategy emerged over the course of the second book of ec-

[47] *I quaranta giorni*, 133. "Una vista mirabilissima dell'amor'puro."

[48] *I colloqui I*, 331. "Stava [...] con gli occhi affissati a un Jesu, [...] che pareva Santa Catherina da Siena. The account continued to claim that she received the stigmata invisibly, like Catherine.

[49] *I quaranta giorni*, 153. "Disse di molte cose, delle quale non ci siamo così appunto potute ricordare."

stasies, *I colloqui*, which contains descriptions of Maria Maddalena's experiences from 1585. One of the principal scribes, Sr Maria Pacifica, described the method in detail for Maria Maddalena's beatification process held in 1612. Two, three, or sometimes four nuns were designated as scribes on each occasion; they took it in turns to write, numbering their sheets as they went around the group so that they could all be pieced together later. The scribes were each assisted by one or two further nuns who focused on memorising what Maria Maddalena was saying and doing in order to recount this to their scribe. The method separated the task of deciding what to record from the (distracting) task of writing. As the team of recording nuns extended beyond scribes alone, so the status of Maria Maddalena's experiences as semi-public events within the convent enclosure was assured.

At the end of each rapture, the sheets were assembled in numerical order (i.e., chronologically) and the account was reconstructed into a fair copy. Difficulties inevitably emerged whilst collating the notes: words had been written badly or it seemed to the nuns as though they must be incorrect.[50] The prioress questioned Maria Maddalena afterwards about these details, making her read what had been written and correct any errors.[51] But as the nuns recorded more, they also accepted more responsibility for the texts. Writing of Maria Maddalena's re-enactment of the passion of Christ in April 1585, for example, the text noted that Maria Maddalena had been too tired afterwards to question, and thus the nuns wrote only "what we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, rather than what we have had from her mouth [afterwards], which will be little, almost nothing."[52]

All the nuns involved in "transcribing" played key roles that ensured they were more than amanuenses or secretaries, and the texts

[50] For example, on 29 April 1585 the transcription noted that some things Maria Maddalena said were obscure and hidden. The nuns asked her about these afterwards and she told them "very benignly" (*molto benignamente*), whereby they were able to note everything "with all fidelity and truth" (*con ogni fedeltà e verità*): *I colloqui II*, 40.

[51] P767, 129, 245–46. Maria Maddalena was asked to say when she had understood something interiorly and to confirm that she had felt such sentiments in the way in which they were recorded.

[52] *I colloqui I*, 381. "Scriverremo quello che con li occhi nostri habbiamo visto e uddito con li orecchi, che quello che habbiamo havuto dalla sua bocca, che sarà poco e quasi nulla."

themselves were not ecstatic dictations of the style typified by Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*. The transcriptions represent a new form of writing in which one woman's mystical experiences were translated into words by a group of nuns almost as dramatic scripts.[53] Over time, an increasingly large number of the eighty nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli were enrolled into a time-consuming attempt to produce texts that might best record the activity of their sister. Their creations were not stolen texts, but part of their own record of experiences to which they themselves contributed.[54] The "enhanced" story of Maria Maddalena's experiences created a specific setting in which ever more nuns were called upon not just to be eye-witnesses to their sister's experiences, but to participate in them.

3. *Participating in the Divine*

Without nuns being present, Maria Maddalena' experiences would not have been recorded as they were. At the same time, both the work of transcribing and the nuns' overlapping process of discernment also provided them with opportunities to relish in divine experiences of which they considered themselves to be a part. The nuns sought out roles for themselves that reflected a belief that their sister's holiness was to be shared. They responded to her as students to a teacher, particularly during the years in which she was novice mistress. They also interacted with her whilst she was in rapture, on occasion because Maria Maddalena herself appeared to demand not just an audience but participants in ecstasies that were more public dramas than secret revelations, and which took place in different convent rooms.[55]

In the close environment of the convent, Maria Maddalena's raptures invited the nuns to "test" them physically, drawing them into

[53] Indeed, *La probatione I* and *La probatione II* place more emphasis still on actions and seem to reflect the movement of phrases rather than direct transcription. For an excellent summary, see Giovanni Pozzi, *Grammatica e retorica dei santi* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), 166–68.

[54] On the nuns as "overhearers," see Armando Maggi's introduction to Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *Selected Revelations*, 13–14.

[55] As, for example, in re-enactments of Christ's passion during which she moved from room to room: *I quaranta giorni*, 156–80 (14–15 April 1584); *I colloqui I*, 381–420 (18–19 April 1585); *La probatione II*, 47–86 (26 March 1592).

further participation in their sister's experiences. The nuns noticed that Maria Maddalena had a tendency to fall into ecstasy whilst she was in the middle of demanding activities, including baking bread and washing clothes, and whilst painting pictures.[56] Several times the nuns saw that she continued to paint as if served by a "natural light" despite appearing in every other way to be in ecstasy.[57] On one occasion they decided to "clear up" what was happening by blindfolding their sister and shutting the windows of the room to ensure complete darkness. They were astonished to see that she continued to work as though indeed served by a natural light (although quite how they saw this is unclear if the room was completely dark). When the incident was discussed as a possible miracle in Maria Maddalena's beatification process in 1612, Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia's testimony embraced the wonder of something that appeared natural but must have been supernatural. Yet her account hinted at a tone of play: blindfolding her sister was not so much a test, as an act of curiosity.

The same fascination—rather than sceptical interest—that inspired the nuns to "test" Maria Maddalena's physical transformations also seems to have infused their attitude towards their sister as a potential miraculous intercessor outside of severe health situations. In August 1588, some wine in the monastery was found to have gone bad, and Vangelista del Giocondo, then prioress, called on Maria Maddalena to pray for its restoration.[58] Falling into rapture, she went to the wine cellar and made the sign of the cross over the bad wine; when the nuns tasted it, it had been restored. The convent's loss would have been significant but not dire, and yet the prioress exploited Maria Maddalena's (supposed) holiness to solve the problem. Indeed, Maria Maddalena was drafted in once more in 1602 when another barrel of wine was deemed to have gone bad.[59] Across a broad range of instances (and not just emergencies), the nuns attempted to harness their sister for the whole community and transform her personal experiences into beneficial social encounters in which they themselves were involved.

[56] P767, 174, 198.

[57] P767, 309.

[58] P767, 192. Curiously, perhaps, those testifying did not draw parallels with Christ's miracle of turning water into wine at Cana (John 2:1–11).

[59] P767, 198.

Mystical or visionary experiences and prophecy were considered to be graces freely given by God, and thus not legal proof of holiness.[60] In Maria Maddalena's case, however, several of the miracles attributed to her were specifically tied to her being in rapture, as in both instances of the restored wine. On another occasion, for example, a nun who had been unable to leave her bed for eighteen months heard an interior voice suggesting she be carried into Maria Maddalena's presence. Once there, Maria Maddalena, in rapture, touched the part where her sister was in pain, and the pain supposedly vanished permanently. The "miraculous" cure was attributed to Maria Maddalena's touch whilst in rapture, thus directly linking a physical "proof" of healing to her ecstatic experience.[61] Moreover, we should not ignore that by calling on their sister as an intercessor in situations such as this, the nuns trusted that she was neither deceived nor deceiving even in their hours of acute need.[62] Hopes in the miraculous reflected a discernment process, and miracles themselves could, retrospectively, be read as tangible proof of correct discernment of the divine. At the same time, belief in Maria Maddalena as a miracle-worker also became another aspect of her holiness which the nuns linked to her ecstasies and in which they participated and delighted.

4. *Clerical Intervention*

Despite Teresa of Avila's attempts to empower prioresses of the Discalced Carmelite communities, she still recognized an important role for (discrete and learned) confessors, advising those inclined towards visions to consult them.[63] In like manner, important though the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli were as Maria Maddalena's first assessors, the involvement of male clerics in some capacity was always inevitable. Yet the interest that these men paid to Maria

[60] Lambertini, *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, III.45 and III.52.

[61] One of the distinctions between demonic wonders (*mira*) and true miracles (*miracula*) was understood to be the end to which it was worked. See Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), esp. 124–25.

[62] P767, 200, 355; *Vita*, 173–74.

[63] For example, Teresa of Avila, *Book of the Foundations*, ch. 8, para. 5. This book, written over a period of nine years, revealed greater wariness of supernatural phenomena and a recognition that women could be deluded when claiming visions.

Maddalena's claims provides an important corrective to the idea the discernment of spirits typically empowered male clerics to the detriment of the visionary and her female community.

Agostino Campi, the convent's confessor and governor at the time of Maria Maddalena's first rapture, showed a strong interest in testing the young nun on points of virtue, principally her humility and her obedience to him as her clerical superior. In April 1585, for instance, Maria Maddalena claimed to have understood in rapture that God wanted her to keep to a particularly austere diet.[64] Campi ruled against the demand and commanded Maria Maddalena to keep to the common life of the community. When she tried to obey, however, it seemed to become impossible for her to swallow and after several days the confessor, given this extraordinary physical sign, approved her particular diet. Maria Maddalena's austere life was itself a cause of wonder.[65] Yet for both her confessor and the nuns it was her obedience to her religious vows that was identified as a visible marker of her holy virtue.

Campi did not, however, have to rely on these signs alone. He had, after all, commissioned accounts of Maria Maddalena's ecstasies so that he could examine them. Although the manuscripts were seen by several confessors and priests—and reveal some editing at their hands—there is some doubt as to how thoroughly they examined them.[66] Nor was Maria Maddalena investigated by the Inquisition or a formal commission of theologians. When Campi died in 1591, he was replaced as confessor to the convent by Francesco Benvenuti (d. 1605), a canon of Florence cathedral. Notes and annotations on the manuscripts suggest that Benvenuti only looked at the first three books of five. In 1593 Maria Maddalena asked Benvenuti's permission to recount all her experiences to the convent's extraordinary confessor, the Jesuit Niccolò Fabbrini (b. 1555), with whom Benvenuti also shared the transcriptions.[67] Both Fabbrini and

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[64] *I colloqui II*, 371–78; *Vita*, 20–24.

[65] *La probatione I*, 151. "We are continually admiring her for the supernatural life that she follows" (*ci andiamo continuamente ammirando della vita soprannaturale che essa tiene*).

[66] Ermanno Ancilli, "I manoscritti originali di S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi," *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 7 (1956): 323–400, esp. 380–81; and ibid., *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi: Estasi, dottrina, influsso* (Rome: Edizioni del Teresianum, 1967), 44–46.

[67] P767, 149–50, 266. Fabbrini was extraordinary confessor, 1592–93.

Benvenuti considered the content of Maria Maddalena's experiences and reassured her that they could find nothing in them that was contrary to Scripture, advising her that it was "the will of God, there was no deception by the devil."[68] Their decision, however, was based not just on the texts, but also on what they themselves knew of her life and had learned from speaking with her. Just as Campi had turned to Maria Maddalena's virtues, so Fabbrini linked his assessment of the nun's visions with behaviour that was "founded in the true and real virtues of charity and humility."[69]

Copies of the manuscripts were again passed to the Jesuits for examination in 1598. One of the readers was Virgilio Cepari (1564–1630), the new rector of the Florentine Jesuit college and extraordinary confessor to Santa Maria degli Angeli.[70] Cepari was also, at that time, heavily involved in promoting the cause for the canonization of Luigi Gonzaga (1568–91), a young Jesuit who had died recently in Rome.[71] Once more, attestations and notes on the manuscripts suggest that the investigation was not extensive. Cepari wrote in approval of the first manuscript (to which he made small corrections), but he himself then stated that he would look at the others only as time permitted: extant notes suggest that he only examined part of the fourth manuscript.[72] In particular, later doubts concerning an incident in which Maria Maddalena had relived Christ's passion suggest that Cepari had indeed failed to read the whole corpus of texts carefully. On this occasion Maria Maddalena had claimed to spend several hours in a cistern at Pilate's house. Theologians later questioned the unscriptural content of this ecstasy, delaying Maria Maddalena's cause for beatification.[73] Given Cepari's theological expertise and involvement in the cause for Luigi Gon-

[68] P767, 150. "Era volunta di Dio, ne c'era inganno del demonio." The transcription further noted that Fabbrini read the texts "to his great consolation" (*con gran sua consolatione*), *La probatione II*, 225.

[69] P767, 267.

[70] He would later be an advocate for Maria Maddalena's cause for beatification.

[71] Cepari had been at the Collegio Romano with Gonzaga and in 1606 published a biography: Virgilio Cepari, *Vita del Beato Luigi Gonzaga della Compagnia di Giesu* (Rome, 1606). He cultivated a devotion to the young Jesuit amongst the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

[72] Ancilli, "I manoscritti originali," 337, 380–81.

[73] "Memoriale," Archivio del Monastero di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, Careggi, Florence, fol. 36r. These doubts concerned two raptures: 18–19 April 1585 (*I colloqui I*, 408–9) and 26 March 1596 (*La probatione II*, 77).

zaga's canonization, it is hard to imagine how he would have left this detail in the manuscripts without clarifying its orthodoxy.

By this point, however, Maria Maddalena's ecstasies and visions had already received highly significant validation from the archbishop of Florence, Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici (1535–1605).[74] His assessment had not been based on the transcriptions but rather, like the nuns, on what he had seen and heard in front of him. In September 1586, the archbishop had visited the convent to oversee the election of a new prioress. Perhaps as a sign of how important the nuns understood their role to be in packaging their sister's experiences within the transcriptions, the prioress tried to keep Maria Maddalena hidden away so that she would not go into rapture in front of their important visitor. The inevitable happened, but the archbishop listened carefully to the nun and spoke with her after her rapture ended.[75] Despite the wealth of texts available, the archbishop's process of discernment was similar to that of the nuns, whose opinions had also been shaped by what they had seen and by their later conversations with Maria Maddalena. Without a formal enquiry—and perhaps influenced by the close relationships that Maria Maddalena and the convent enjoyed with women of the Medici family—the archbishop declared that her revelations had solid foundation.[76]

5. *A Communal Rhetoric of Humility*

Like another Carmelite nun, Teresa of Avila, Maria Maddalena showed a keen interest in monastic reform. Both were amongst only five women canonized in the seventeenth century, with both being promoted as saintly mystic nuns.[77] It is perhaps not surprising,

[74] Alessandro de' Medici was elected pope in 1605, taking the name Leo XI; he died that same year.

[75] *La probatione I*, 38–40.

[76] *La probatione I*, 40. "Aveva trovato gran fondamento e prudential in lei." Maria Maddalena boasted a particularly strong relationship with Maria de' Medici, who she had known as a child and with whom she maintained a correspondence even after the Medici princess married and left for France. For their extant letters, see Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *L'epistolario completo*, 200–1, 245–46.

[77] It is worth noting, however, that although Maria Maddalena had a keen interest in religious observance, she did not establish reformed convents (unlike Teresa) and was not a Discalced Carmelite.

therefore, that she has been put forward as "the Italian incarnation of Teresan sanctity."[78] However, the way in which Maria Maddalena's mystical experiences were recorded differed dramatically from the way in which Teresa recounted her progress in the spiritual life, and this led to a different method by which the origins of these experiences were discerned.

Teresa wrote her *Vida* at the command of several confessors. It provides a compelling first-person narrative concerning the discernment of spirits and her experience of visions, ecstasy, and divine gifts.[79] The text was first published in Spain in 1588 and in Italian translation in Rome in 1599, gaining some prominence.[80] Alison Weber has shown how Teresa adopted a "rhetoric of humility" in the *Vida* that allowed her to justify her experiences within the framework expected of her by learned clergy.[81] Teresa's texts nevertheless attracted criticism: in 1589 the Dominican Alonso de la Fuente (1533–94) argued that no woman could have written such works and that Teresa must have been deluded.[82] It was unsurprising, therefore, that a key question within Teresa's cause for canonization was whether she could have authored texts that were considered to be doctrinally beyond the scope of "any woman, particularly one without study of theology."[83]

By contrast, Maria Maddalena was not strictly speaking the author of the texts detailing her ecstasies. Indeed, neither was the convent's confessor nor any clergyman, despite some editorial input

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[78] Gabriella Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline, 1450–1650," in Scaraffia and Zarri, *Women and Faith*, 111. It is worth noting that Maria Maddalena was not a Discalced Carmelite and, unlike Teresa, did not found any reformed convents.

[79] On Teresa's *Vida*, see Colin Thompson above, esp. 55–62.

[80] On translations of Teresa's texts in Italy, see Elisabetta Marchetti, *Le prime traduzioni italiane delle opere di Teresa di Gesù nel quadro dell'impegno papale post-tridentino* (Bologna: Lo Scarabeo, 2001). Teresa's "Life" was translated by an Oratorian priest, Giovanni Francesco Bordini: *Vita della M[adre] Teresa di Giesù, fondatrice delli monasteri delle monache, et frati Carmelitani Scalzi della prima regola* (Rome, 1599).

[81] Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990). See also Carole Slade, *St Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Gillian Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996).

[82] Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila*, 114–44, esp. 119. Alonso specifically argued that Teresa must have been taught "by the evil angel" (*ángel malo*).

[83] Silverio de Santa Teresa, *Procesos de beatiflcación y canonización de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, 3 vols. (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1934-35), 2:596.

from them. As we have seen, it was the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli who physically wrote the texts, and the particular way in which they were produced became highly significant when it came to seeking Maria Maddalena's beatification. The immediate nature of the records conferred a sense of authenticity, whilst the fact that Maria Maddalena was not their sole author provided an excuse for any errors or inadequacies within them.

The introductory letter to the first manuscript, *I quaranta giorni*, addressed to Campi suggests how this was done. Written in October 1584, Sr Maria Maddalena Mori (one of the scribes) states very clearly that the text records those "things that the Lord in his infinite goodness has deigned to communicate in abstraction of mind to our beloved Suor Maria Maddalena."[84] There is a confident tone to the letter, reflecting the community's belief in the divine origin of Maria Maddalena's experiences. At the same time, however, there are indications of anxiety about what the confessor might think once he has examined such a comprehensive account. Maria Maddalena Mori first openly requests any errors be corrected, and secondly attributes those errors to herself. She writes:

> I send this to you so that you might be able to review it and, if there is any defect, correct it, imputing all that you find bad with it to my lack of consideration and ignorance, which, as Your Reverence knows, is considerable. Therefore, please excuse me, praying the Lord for Him to pardon me and give me the grace to bear fruit from this beautiful occasion that he gives me to be able to know the great mercy of the Lord himself in communicating himself marvellously to his creatures, most of all, I say, to those who make themselves fit to receive his gifts and graces.[85]

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[84] *I quaranta giorni*, 95. "Quelle così belle e util'cose [...], le quale in questo nostro tempo sè degnato il Signore per sua infinita Bontà comunicare in astratione di mente alla nostra sopradiletta Suor Maria Maddalena." The last of the raptures narrated within this manuscript occurred in August 1584, some two months before the date on the letter. In the meantime a fair copy of the text had been produced, largely by Sr Maria Maddalena Mori after Sr Veronica Alessandri had fallen sick.

[85] *I quaranta giorni*, 95. "Ve le mando acciò possiate rivedere se c'è difetto nessuno, e ricorreggerlo, imputando il tutto che trovate di male alla mia inconsideratione e ignorantia, la quale è nota a Vostra Reverentia quanta sia grande, però mi scuserete, pregando il Signore che mi perdoni et mi dia gratia di far' frutto di questa bella occasione che mi sè porta di poter' conoscere le miseratione grande di esso Signore in comunicarsi sì mirabilmente alle sue creature, a quelle dico massimamente che si rendono atte a poter' ricevere gli sua doni e gratie."

Compared with an autobiography, or a biography or account directly involving a confessor, the transcriptions offered a third way. The texts could be assessed by the confessor as someone who could claim to be neutral in the endeavour, but any errors could be attributed to someone other than Maria Maddalena herself. Like Teresa, Maria Maddalena also made use of a language of personal humility. But importantly, her community likewise adopted this sort of personal humility in reference to themselves as scribes by which they made plain that the texts used to assess Maria Maddalena's experiences depended heavily on their own (unlearned) shortcomings.

Despite the existence of highly detailed transcriptions—and in contrast to Teresa of Avila's process— the investigations for Maria Maddalena's beatification focused on the *Vita* written by her confessor, Vincenzo Puccini (also the promoter for the cause), and not on the nuns' texts.[86] The *Vita* was used only after establishing the accuracy of the transcriptions that were its sources and obtaining attestations of its reliability from the nuns involved. The path to focusing on the *Vita* had started already in August 1607, just two months after Maria Maddalena's death, when Puccini organised the nuns to add attestations to their transcriptions confirming their accuracy.[87] When Puccini then used these texts as the basis for his biography (first published in 1609), he acquired an attestation from each (eye-witness) nun for each chapter that quoted from the transcriptions.[88] The second part of the biography included lengthy (although edited) excerpts from some of the transcriptions, and when a second edition was issued in 1611, four further parts were added with even more excerpts.[89] The inclusion of excerpts combined with the nuns' attestations provided the foundation for Puccini's *Vita* to become the public text of Maria Maddalena's experiences, over and above the transcriptions. In this way, her visions and raptures reached a wider audience, but they were also read within a literary context that was deliberately constructed by her

[86] Puccini (d. 1626) was a secular priest and governor of the convent, 1605–26.

[87] See Ancilli, *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi*, 45–46.

[88] *Vita*, following "Al devoto lettore;" and P767, 1459–60. The attestations were taken by a notary in the presence of Piero Niccolini (vicar general of the diocese) and a copy conserved in the archdiocesan archive, Florence.

[89] Puccini, *Vita della Veneranda Madre Suor M[ari]a Maddalena de' Pazzi fiorentina [...] con l'Aggiunta, della Terza, Quarta, Quinta, e Sesta Parte* (Florence, 1611).

confessor in order to promote her canonization.[90] Although Puccini acknowledged that he was forced to edit the texts, he made a virtue of the act by stressing that some ecstasies were so long as to be "tedious to the reader."[91]

Since Maria Maddalena had not written "her" texts herself, Puccini could use the nuns as eye-witnesses to confirm the authority of *his* hagiographical text almost as though it were a direct account of Maria Maddalena's experiences (i.e., the transcriptions). In the process, he and the nuns successfully sidestepped any questions over whether Maria Maddalena was sufficiently learned to produce spiritual texts without diabolical influences. By the time of the second enquiry into Maria Maddalena's beatification, held in Florence in 1624, a devotee was even claiming a miracle based on the use of Puccini's *Vita* almost as a relic of the nun herself, such was its status.[92] Even when Maria Maddalena was finally canonized in 1669, a publication of fifty of her ecstasies produced in celebration was based on excerpts from Puccini's expanded biography of 1611 and not the original transcriptions.[93]

The success of Puccini's *Vita* and its importance within the beatification process in some senses diminished the role of the nuns of Santa Maria degli Angeli: they were no longer participants in the divine, but mere eye-witnesses to it. Ultimately the nuns' method for recording their sister's raptures did not so much justify their own unique texts but the biography produced by their confessor. Yet their editorial work, which had so reflected their own discernment of Maria Maddalena's experiences, did continue to influence their sister's saintly reputation. Although repackaged as a biography written by a confessor, it was nevertheless the nuns' interpretation of Maria Maddalena's shared experiences that became public.

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[90] Chiara Frugoni, "Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography," in Bornstein and Rusconi, *Women and Religion*, 130–64, esp. 152. Frugoni stresses how the everyday context provided by *vite* transformed the mystical language of the visionary into something much more accessible for the devout.

[91] *Vita*, 297.

[92] Processus 769, fol. 253v, Cong. Riti, Archivio Segreto Vaticano.

[93] Carlo Tomasi, *Cento estasi de' Santi Pietro d'Alcantara, e M[aria] Maddalena de' Pazzi: Cinquanta dell'uno, e cinquanta dell'altra* (Rome, 1669).

6. *Conclusion*

Within the cloister Maria Maddalena's life was one open to both control and exchange, but both were first exercised by the community in which she lived before she encountered her confessor. Her community appeared to show no particular embarrassment about the young nun's extreme behaviour because she conformed to a life of virtue and her fellow nuns felt consoled. The nuns felt themselves able to discern the divine origin of Maria Maddalena's experiences and they did this based on the effects not only on her but on them too. Maria Maddalena's dramatic and physical experiences placed great importance on her body as a reflection of the holiness she claimed to be penetrating, and her body also became a means for others to access that divinity and holiness. What might have been personal, individual experiences thus became social and communal for those who surrounded her.

Crucial to Maria Maddalena's "success" was the way in which her immediate audience, the nuns, quickly marvelled at her transformations, virtue, and miracle-working powers and embraced her experiences as divine. In many ways her personal raptures were inaccessible to her sisters, yet they actively sought a role as participants, and she also sought to incorporate her audience in several of her encounters. The nuns became more than just eyewitnesses or disciples but felt they had taken part in the experiences that they recorded and interpreted. The story of the "transcriptions" and their translation into a biography speaks to the enduring importance of confessors in the promotion of official sanctity. But the nuns' devotion to recording every last detail of Maria Maddalena's experiences reminds us that they too were involved in a careful process of assessing and adopting her holiness. This was holiness that could be shared: shared above all by the community of women who lived with Maria Maddalena every day and who were the first to see and hear all that she did within the confines of their convent enclosure.

CHAPTER FOUR

HERETICAL SAINTS AND TEXTUAL DISCERNMENT: THE POLEMICAL ORIGINS OF THE *ACTA SANCTORUM* (1643–1940)

JAN MACHIELSEN*

The sixty-eight folio volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* (1643–1940), and the 6,200 saints they contain, have gradually made their way into the historical spotlight. Historians have made increasing use of their scholarship. Saints, and therefore the saints' lives collated and edited by the Society of Bollandists, are prisms which shed light on the societies in which they lived. Peter Brown, in particular, has used saints' lives as mirrors to catch, from an angle, a glimpse of the average Late Roman.[1] As the Belgian sociologist Pierre Delooz has famously pointed out, "one is never a saint except for other people."[2] The lives of saintly exemplars, therefore, tell us much about the society that placed them in a position of high esteem. The same, this chapter suggests, holds true for the lives and acts of the early modern hagiographers who edited them.

The study of the role of saints within early modern Catholicism has gathered steam in the wake of Peter Burke's now almost canonical exposition on "How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint."[3] Saints have become objects to "think with," revealing the underlying

* The author thanks Clare Copeland, Juliane Kerkhecker, and Alex Russell for their comments on drafts of this chapter.

[1] Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101, here 81. For Brown's praise of the Bollandists: Ibid., 80.

[2] Pierre Delooz, "Towards a sociological study of canonized sainthood," in *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 189–216, here 194. Delooz goes on to observe that "they are also made saints by other people." Ibid., 199.

[3] Republished, for instance, as Peter Burke, "How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint," in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David M. Luebke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 129–42.

structures of early modern Catholic thought.[4] If in Simon Ditchfield's phrase "all hagiography is contemporary hagiography," it was only a matter of time before the discipline became an object of historical study in its own right, part of the burgeoning field of "sacred history."[5] Yet, the editors of the *Acta* have largely escaped historical study.[6] In particular, the origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* have never been the object of independent enquiry.

The aim of this chapter is to reassess the foundation of the Society of Bollandists in order to interpret a story of origin that has been told and re-told for many generations. Historians are well-aware that human memory involves the act of forgetfulness; what is absent is as revealing as what is there.[7] The rediscovery of the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* therefore is significant by virtue of having first been forgotten. Similarly, anthropologists have taught us that stories of origins aim to resolve contradictions that cannot be reconciled.[8] A study of the foundation myth of the Society of Bollandists will tell us much about the problematic, yet interdependent relationship between notions of sanctity and the problem of discernment of spirits.

For the editors of (largely medieval) saints' lives the problem of discernment of past spirits was particularly poignant. The historical dimension added two layers of complexity to the enterprise. First,

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[4] Simon Ditchfield, "Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (2009): 552–84. Ditchfield's article is an homage to Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

[5] Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity, and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 1; on "sacred history", see the chapters by Anthony Grafton and Ditchfield in: Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, eds., *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 3–26 and 72–100.

[6] A recent exception is Jan Marco Sawilla, *Antiquarianismus, Hagiographie und Historie im 17. Jahrhundert: Zum Werk der Bollandisten; Ein wissenschaftshistorischer Versuch* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2009). See also the very useful case study of Bollanidst working practices by Edmund Kern, "Counter-Reformation Sanctity: The Bollandists' Vita of Blessed Hemma of Gurk," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45, no. 3 (1994), 412–34.

[7] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), ch. 1, esp. 14–15.

[8] The reference here is to structural anthropology and the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. See Wendy Doniger, "Claude Lévi-Strauss's Theoretical and Actual Approaches to Myth," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Boris Wiseman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 196–215, here 206–7.

there is the difficulty of establishing (or the opportunity of doubting) whether the events, miracles, and visions described had even taken place. As we shall see, the possibility of their invention made *discretio spirituum* itself a secondary concern. The dilemma it led to was much the same but was more beneficial or problematic depending on the perspective of the editor. It opened up the possibility to doubt the actuality of a miracle, without doubting the sanctity of the miracle worker involved. (That is, an implausible miracle or vision need not be demonic; it could also not have happened.) Yet, some of the editors discussed below appear to have regarded what I shall call textual discernment as a slippery slope. For them, no past error or mistake could be admitted as it would cast doubt on the veracity of the whole narrative.

Secondly, the historical dimension, indeed the very existence of the original saint's life, also meant that the saint in question had been venerated by part or all of the Church. As Clare Copeland has shown in the preceding chapter, the production and circulation of eye-witness documents of sanctity already allowed a saint's adherents a share or stake in his or her experiences. On one level, past veneration, especially when it had been officially recognized, meant that the act of discernment was superfluous as sanctity had already been established; on another, that new concern about the sanctity of previously recognized saints was potentially subversive. Here, the hagiographer confronted that peculiar problem that faced the Catholic Reformation as a whole; that reform, instituted by a Church which was *semper eadem* (always the same), could not be readily admitted.[9]

To these two concerns, which we shall meet in passing, a third must be added: the sacred nature of the pursuit of hagiography, of which the discernment by text demanded of the hagiographer was but one part. The fact that hagiography was a sacred enterprise in and of itself helped determine how it was conducted. The story of the origins of the *Acta Sanctorum* sheds light on how the act of discernment and the pursuit of sanctity by hagiographers shaped the lives of the saints posthumously. This story has changed little since the Flemish Jesuit Jean Bolland (1596–1665) first put it in writing 370

[9] For more on this conundrum, see Jan Machielsen, "The Counter-Reformation," in *Encyclopedia of Neo-Latin Studies*, ed. Philip Ford, Jan Bloemendal, and Charles Fantazzi, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, [2013])

years ago.[10] Although somewhat further sketched in, the broad contours of Bolland's narrative are instantly recognizable in the volumes that celebrated the ter- and quadcentenary of the Society that bears his name.[11] In the preface of the first 1643 volume, which covered saints whose feast day fell in the first half of January in the liturgical calendar, Bolland traced the project back to a small *octavo* sized book, the *Fasti Sanctorum* (Calendar of the Saints, 1607) by the Jesuit Heribert Rosweyde (1569–1629).[12] Bolland's account is by no means a straightforward historical narrative, however. It contains some telling lacuna and should be interpreted, as any other story of origins, for its meaning, not as historical fact. The relationship between Bolland and Rosweyde needs to be examined afresh.

For Rosweyde, the *Fasti* had been the opening salvo for a project to collect and publish materials pertaining to the lives of the saints. The *Fasti*, however, were a false start. Teaching commitments and, especially, confessional polemic intervened to frustrate the project, as Bolland noted with a hint of disapproval. In 1629, just after announcing the imminent arrival of the first January volume of his *Vitae Sanctorum*, Rosweyde died a death in the hagiographical line of duty. The fall of Den Bosch to Dutch troops had sent the books of its Jesuit College to Antwerp, where they arrived damaged, wet, and, foul smelling.

> These books [Rosweyde] read with too much haste according to his insatiable desire for learning and he avidly investigated whether he could find anything hitherto unseen by him. He breathed in their cor-

[10] Jean Bolland et al., eds., *Acta Sanctorum* [henceforth, *AS*], 68 vols. (Antwerp-Brussels, 1643–1940), vol. 1, ix–x. Unless otherwise indicated future references are to this volume. I have used the text available through the *Acta Sanctorum Database* (ProQuest), accessible online at: http://acta.chadwyck.co.uk, but I have substituted v's for u's and vice versa, where appropriate. The nineteenth-century French (loose) translation of the prologue has been used to clarify some finer points of Latin: J. Carnandet and J. Fèvre, ed., *Les Actes des Saints depuis l'origine de l'église jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Librairie catholique de Louis Gauthier, 1866).

[11] Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries, 1615–1915* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1922), 8–21; Robert Godding et al., *Bollandistes, saints et légendes: Quatre siècles de recherche* ([Brussels]: Société des Bollandistes, 2007), 24–29; and most recently, Bernard Joassart, *Aspects de l'érudition hagiographique aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 1–44.

[12] Heribert Rosweyde, *Fasti Sanctorum* [henceforth, *FS*] (Antwerp, 1607).

> rupt air. Some at the time have complained that by this [Rosweyde's] body had been disturbed and altered.[13]

A few days later, after administering the last rites to a plague victim, Rosweyde contracted a fever and died.

Bolland's description of Rosweyde's death served to redeem the latter's polemical distractions. In later accounts Rosweyde remains a flawed or at least easily distracted hero who foolishly believed that a project such as the *Acta* could have been undertaken by a single middle-aged man. Robert Bellarmine's possibly apocryphal and oft-repeated exclamation—"does this man think that he will live 200 years!"—has worked its way from Bolland's preface into modern Counter-Reformation scholarship.[14] The comment may appear well justified from a distance of some 400 years, but it in fact measures Rosweyde by the more demanding standards of Bolland's later project.

Bolland made use of the material that had already been collected but his project differed, as we shall see, from Rosweyde's plan in manifold ways. Bolland himself stressed that,

> my intention is not to follow anxiously in the footsteps of Rosweyde; as those had not firmly been imprinted by having finished part of the work, but had no more than lightly touched [the ground] by having sketched out a certain idea in thin lines.[15]

It served Bolland's purpose to locate the divine spark that prompted his own foray into such a sacred topic within someone who had predeceased him. Lost in the dark and dense forest that Rosweyde had left him, it occurred to the Jesuit that "if it was dear to God, that the deeds of his soldiers [the saints] came forth in the light, he will provide so that this work could be moved forward in whatsoever way even by me, because from there someone more skilled would

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[13] *AS*, x. "hos ille libros cum praepropere pro sua inexplebili discendi cupiditate pervoluit, atque avide investigat, num quid sibi antehac invisum reperire possit, corruptum ex iis aerem hausit, quo commotum alteratumque sibi corpus fuisse, nonnemini tunc est questus."

[14] *AS*, xxiii. "an ei esset exploratum se ad 200. annos esse victurum." Cf. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 137.

[15] *AS*, xxiii. "Nec vestigia Rosweydi anxie ac sollicite persequi animus est, ut quae non fixa firmiter, parte aliqua operis absoluta, sed leviter pressa dumtaxat, idea quadam tenuibus lineamentis informata."

complete it."[16]

At the heart of the *Acta Sanctorum* lay a very careful balancing act. Bollandists embarked on the divine—indeed, possibly saintly—task of hagiography. They were able to ask for but unable and unwilling to claim divine guidance for themselves and the gift of discernment which this entailed. Yet, Bollandists did project (near-)miraculous powers on their deceased predecessors. For Bolland the need for textual discernment led to a paradox; for the divine inspiration that could enable such discernment could not possibly be (publicly) claimed. It could, and was, only claimed on Bolland's behalf by his successors. With Bolland's need for Rosweyde in mind, it is useful to consider what *separated* the two men. I will argue that Rosweyde put forward an approach to discernment which was very different from that set out later by Bolland. Rosweyde had made discernment an act of philology, consisting only of the collation of ancient manuscripts. For Rosweyde, the events these manuscripts recounted could not be doubted. As such, the personal sanctity of the hagiographer *ought* to have been irrelevant (as irrelevant as the problem of discernment of spirits) but, for reasons we will investigate, this was not the case.

Rosweyde's hagiographical interests had clear, yet previously unknown antecedents which should reshape our understanding of his motives. Later Bollandists were aware that prior to his *Fasti* of 1607 Rosweyde's literary activities had been limited to a liminary poem for the *Disquisitiones magicae* (Investigations into Magic, 1599–1600) of the Spanish-Flemish Jesuit Martin Delrio (1551–1608), an influential study of (among other things) witchcraft and superstition.[17] Bollandists have seen this as Rosweyde's brief encounter with the "philosophy of the period [which] only offered a merry-go-round where [Rosweyde] could have turned round and round his entire life."[18] In their view, some sort of almost Damascene conversion must have already occurred years earlier during Rosweyde's stay in Douai as a Jesuit novice.

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[16] *AS*, xi. "Sed illud deinde in mentem venit, si Deo cordi esset, suorum militum res gestas ita prodire in lucem, provisurum ut vel a me quoquo modo hoc opus promoveretur, quod deinde peritior perficeret."

[17] Paul Peeters, *L'Oeuvre des Bollandistes*, new ed. (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1961), 4.

[18] Peeters, *L'Oeuvre*, 4. "La philosophie de l'époque ne lui offrait qu'un manège, où il aurait pu tourner en rond, sa vie durant."

> Today, [. . .] we easily find a thousand good reasons to judge the hagiographical literature bequeathed by the High Middle Ages as insufficient. It would be exciting to know by what clear-sighted intuition this truth entered the mind (*se fit jour dans l'esprit*) of a young professor of philosophy, who is not known to have protested against the infantile commentaries on the *Physics* and *Natural Problems* of Aristotle which kept on being embroidered in Coimbra, Salamanca, and other places.[19]

There is good reason to question the existence of such a moment of revelation. Rosweyde was Martin Delrio's biographer and student. The project for the *Fasti* and *Acta Sanctorum* can be traced back one generation earlier.

This chapter brings to light the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum*. Rosweyde, and Delrio before him, regarded textual discernment as a form of philology which Bolland and others thought naive. Yet, this approach to saints' lives is fully comprehensible when placed within a wider struggle against heresy which regarded the saints as fellow soldiers of Christ. In this struggle against heresy no ground could be ceded, and hence no discernment was required. Texts were only to be restored, not emended or improved. However, Rosweyde's approach, fuelled as it was by the fight against the heretics, also put further emphasis on the imitative aspects of the worship of the saints and the particular holiness demanded of the hagiographer. It is here that Bolland's debt to Rosweyde is most in evidence.

1. *Rosweyde & Jesuit Hagiography before Bolland*

It is tempting to see the *Fasti* and the *Acta* as the first Jesuit incursions into sacred history. At least one of Bolland's correspondents, the Irish Jesuit Paul Sherlock, saw the project as entering territory previously dominated by non-Jesuits.[20] There is a kernel of truth to

[19] Peeters, *L'Oeuvre*, 5. "Aujourd'hui, [. . .] on découvre sans peine mille bonnes raisons de juger insuffisante toute la littérature hagiographique léguée par le bas moyen âge. Mais il serait piquant de connaître par quelle intuition clairvoyante cette vérité se fit jour dans l'esprit d'un jeune professeur de philosophie, qui n'est pas connu pour avoir jamais protesté contre les commentaires enfantins que l'on continuait de broder à Coïmbre, Salamanque et autres lieux sur la *Physique* et les *Problèmes Naturels* d'Aristote."

[20] Sawilla, *Antiquarianismus*, 341.

this; the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (12 volumes; 1588–1607) by the Oratorian Cesare Baronio (1538–1607) was the implicit and explicit point of reference for all the protagonists considered here. But it ignores the fact that saints' lives were pivotal to Jesuit self-perception. "The Father of the Society [of Jesus]," Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) had famously been converted by his reading of saints' lives during his recovery from wounds sustained in the battle of Pamplona—a point insisted on not a little by Bolland.[21] Alongside an addiction to reports and reporting, the Society quickly developed a tradition of composing *vitae* of its deceased members.

Most of these *vitae* remained in manuscript but in Pedro de Ribadeneira (1527–1611) the Society possessed a skilled hagiographer, able to elegantly obscure Ignatius's problematic dearth of miracles.[22] The Flemish Jesuit Andreas Schott, a later colleague of Rosweyde in Antwerp, had translated (originally plagiarised) Ribadeneira's Spanish *Vita* of Francis Borgia (1510–72), the third Jesuit General and a future saint, into Latin.[23]

Such hagiography, which covered the life of the Society's early giants, appears different from what Rosweyde proposed and Bolland accomplished. In the preface of his *Vita Ignatii Loiolae* (Life of Ignatius of Loyola, 1572), Ribadeneira discussed the importance of the hagiographer's truthfulness:

> Because I am not going to speak on the sanctity of some very ancient man, where one could embellish anything to the truth, no one refuting it already on account of its antiquity, but what we offer is well

[21] *AS*, xiii–xiv, xxxviii, lvii; cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Autobiography of St Ignatius*, trans. and ed. J. F. X. O'Conor (New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1900), 24.

[22] Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae* (Naples, 1572), 208; on Ribadeneira, see Jodi Bilinkoff, "The Many 'Lives' of Pedro de Ribadeneyra," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1999): 180–96.

[23] Cf. Andreas Schottus, *De Vita Francisci Borgiae [. . .] libri quattuor* (Rome, 1596), sig. *2v–*3r. "meas esse partes duxi, licet eventu impari, pari tamen voluntate, atque conatu, quae de Francisci vita, legendo *Hispanorum monumenta*, sciscitandoque pridem didicissem, *litterarum monumentis mandare*"; and, Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vita Francisci Borgiae [. . .] latine vero ab And. Schotto* (Antwerp, 1598), sig. *4v–*5r. "meas esse partes duxi, licet conatu impari, pari tamen voluntate, quae de Francisci vita, legendo *praeclara Petri Ribadeneirae monumenta*, sciscitandoque pridem didicissem, *Latino posteris sermone transcriberem*." Emphasis added.

> known to those of the multitude who lived so very close and familiarly with him [Ignatius] of whom we are speaking.[24]

Ribadeneira's comment, as we shall see, goes to the very heart of the problem of textual discernment, where *discretio spirituum* was secondary to the question of whether events had even taken place.

Ribadeneira's influence on his Netherlandish contemporaries is hard to estimate. Rosweyde translated Ribadeneira's *Flos Sanctorum* (Blossom of the Saints, 1601) into Dutch. The Spanish Jesuit's interest in composing lives "anew" (*de nuevo*) meant that the engagement of Rosweyde and Bolland with their Spanish predecessor was only indirect.[25] One clear target however, was the Carthusian friar Laurentius Surius (1522–78). Surius had reworked a disorganised compilation of saints' lives by the bishop of Verona, Luigi Lipomani (1500–59) into a collection organised according to the Church's liturgical calendar. Surius's collection proved immensely popular despite its size and price, and in 1590 the Dutch priest Franciscus Haraeus (c. 1550–1632) published a short compendium of saint's lives drawn "above all" from the Carthusian friar for those who lacked the time or money to read Surius in his entirety.[26]

Surius had stripped out supposedly spurious events and corrected faulty medieval grammar and style. It was to this editing that Rosweyde objected in the *Fasti*. Rosweyde maintained that "art destroyed truth, and because the gracefulness of style is sought, that of virtues is neglected. [...] The saints love their honour to be expressed by their natural colour, not by cosmetics (*litt.* dye); [...] they prefer to be known, rather than have their vestment admired."[27] In response, Rosweyde proposed to publish critical,

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[24] Ribadeneira, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae*, sigs. †5v–†6r. "quia non de antiquissimi alicuius viri Sanctitate, mihi agendum est: in quo veritati quicquam affingere liceat, nemine propter vetustatem iam refellente, sed haec iis cognoscenda proferimus, quorum permulti coniunctissime cum eo ipso, de quo loquimur, familiarissimeque vixerunt." The passage is an adaptation of Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.2.9.

[25] Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Flos sanctorum, o, Libro de las vidas de los santos,* 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1604), sig. ¶6v. In the preface to the *AS*, Bolland places Ribadeneira among the, less reliable, compendia of lives, "quae ex genuinis contractae, vel certe variis locis interpolatae." *AS*, xxxvii.

[26] Franciscus Haraeus, *Vitae sanctorum: ex probatissimis authoribus, et potissimum ex Surio, brevi compendio summa fide collectae* (Antwerp, 1590), sig. *2v.

[27] *FS*, 11. "Ars veritatem perdidit, & quoniam styli gratia quaeritur, negligitur virtutum. [...] Sancti honorem suum colore suo, non fuco exprimi amant: [...] malunt se nosci, quam vestem conspici."

*un*improved editions of original saints' lives. The Jesuit believed that these lives spoke for themselves.

We have already witnessed Bellarmine's incredulous reaction upon learning the scope of the project. The reaction of the Jesuit hierarchy was equally discouraging. In 1611, four years after publishing the *Fasti*, Rosweyde drew up one of many justifications for the delays his publicly advertised project had already incurred. In it, he again refuted objections raised by his wary superiors. To the charge that the project was too difficult for a single man, Rosweyde raised the counter-example of Baronio's *Annales*, a comparison which highlighted more his ambition than the realiztic nature of the project since Baronio had left his project unfinished.

> If a matter were useful in itself and of great moment to the glorification of the Catholic Church, which few terrified by the vastness and difficulties of the work either dare or wish to embark on, it is proper to long for and embrace the eager will of an industrious man [i.e., Rosweyde], who offers to conquer these difficulties with the grace of God and the help of others. And the lifetime of one person ought to be esteemed of small importance so that the history of the saints of all ages is illustrated.[28]

Concerns that the Carthusians, the monastic order to which Surius belonged, might take offence at Rosweyde's explicit revisionism were similarly dismissed. "[For if] Surius was allowed to publish the lives of saints after Luigi Lipomani without true injury to Lipomani; why would another not be permitted after Surius?"[29] Yet, Jesuit reluctance was understandable. The fact that Surius had been converted by Petrus Canisius (1521–97), a feat later trumpeted in his Jesuit *Vita*, meant that Jesuits had a stake in the Carthusian's reputation.[30]

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[28] Heribert Rosweyde, "Plan conçu par le père Rosweyde la Compagnie de Jésus, pour la publication des Acta Sanctorum" in *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique*, ed. Edm. Reusens, P. D. Kuyl and C. B. de Ridder, vol. 5 (Leuven: Ch. Peeters, 1868), 261–70, here 268–69. "Si res in se utilis et magni momenti sit ad Ecclesiae catholicae illustrationem, quam pauci aggredi vel audent vel volunt territi operis vastitate et difficultatibus, exoptanda videtur et amplectenda prompta laboriosi hominis voluntas, qui se ad difficultates illas superandas cum Dei gratia et aliorum subsidio offerat. Et unius hominis aetas parvi videtur facienda, ut historia sanctorum tot aetatum illustretur."

[29] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 268. "Licuit Surio post Aloysium Lipomanum vitas sanctorum edere, sine vera Lipomani injuria; quidni et alteri post Surium liceat?"

[30] Matthäus Rader, *De vita Petri Canisii [. . .] libri tres*, new ed. (Munich, 1623), 13–

The enthusiastic letter of Superior General Claudio Acquaviva which Rosweyde copied out for the benefit of his immediate superiors does not survive in the Jesuit archives.[31] One letter that does survive worries about the great expense involved and the replication of work already accomplished.[32] A 1613 letter from the local provincial restated a suggestion, made originally by Bellarmine, that Rosweyde should focus on those saints' lives left unpublished by Surius.[33] In 1622 the rector of the Antwerp professed house judged Rosweyde's knowledge of temporal matters ("experientia rerum temporalium") as only mediocre.[34] While the admittedly older Andreas Schott was given a secretary to assist him, Rosweyde was not.[35] What we are presented with does not, therefore, amount to a ringing endorsement of either Rosweyde or his project.

Instead, the picture that emerges fully from the archives is an active campaign conducted by Rosweyde, yet cloaked in the language of obedience, which was designed to overcome internal opposition. Rosweyde's letters give us a glimpse of the resistance he faced. In his 1613 reply to his provincial's concerns, he demanded to be told if there were any new reasons for him to abandon the project. "Notwithstanding that there is one among the consulters [of the province] who has always been against this project, I was ordered to begin."[36] Recent archival research by Bollandists has brought to light that Rosweyde himself had been his publisher's best client. The Jesuit acquired some 160 copies of the *Fasti* over the summer follow-

14; Rader added that Canisius discussed the discipline of saints' lives "frequenter" (frequently) with Surius.

[31] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 270.

[32] Claudio Acquaviva to Heribert Rosweyde, 5 September 1609, Flandro-Belgica [henceforth, Fl. Belg.] 1–II, fol. 1137, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [henceforth, ARSI], Rome.

[33] Guillaume Veranneman to Rosweyde, 8 July 1613. Robert Godding, "L'Oeuvre hagiographique d'Héribert Rosweyde," in *De Rosweyde aux Acta Sanctorum: La recherche hagiographique des Bollandistes à travers quatre siècles*, ed. Robert Godding et al. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2009), 35–62, here 51 (Document I).

[34] Catalogus triennalis 1622, Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 1v, ARSI, Rome.

[35] Catalogus brevis 1616, Fl. Belg. 44, fol. 7r, ARSI, Rome, where Joannes Grauwels is listed as "Aman[uensis] P[atris] Schotti."

[36] Rosweyde to Veranneman, between 9 July and 4 September 1613. Godding, "L'Oeuvre," 51–52, here 52 (Document II). "Quamquam inter consultores unus est qui semper contrarius fuit huic instituto, quo tamen non obstante, iussus fui inchoare."

ing its appearance.[37] How Rosweyde obtained the necessary funds is unclear; external financial support is possible. We should therefore see the *Fasti* more as an attempt to gather support than an attempt to whet the public's appetite with a specimen. By publicly advertising his *Vitae Sanctorum* project Rosweyde made it impossible for the Society to renege on the plan. At least, that is how the Jesuit himself saw it. In his 1611 memorandum Rosweyde listed the attention the project had already received among his reasons to continue:

> Because with the consent and on the advice of his superiors, [Rosweyde] has published and distributed around the whole world the *Fasti Sanctorum* or a specimen of the whole work, in which his plan and method of treating the histories of all saints is expressed. The *Fasti* were sent to wise men in all parts of the world, so that they could see if they could contribute anything to this undertaking.[38]

Rosweyde's insistence that in carrying out his project he was simply obeying his superiors was rhetorical—the very existence of these documents showed Rosweyde's hard-headed persistence.

In the same memorandum Rosweyde revealed just how the project had originally been conceived, however indirectly, by his superiors. In 1603, the Visitor of the Belgian Province, Olivier Manare, had inquired of his fellow Jesuits, "which pursuits they were looking at, and by what sort of pursuit especially any [of them] could be useful to the Church and bring glory to the Society."[39] Rosweyde immediately suggested the study of the saints, many manuscripts of which were still languishing unpublished in Belgian libraries. "He affirmed that, if it appeared proper to his superiors and he were given spare time, he was not averse to this kind of project."[40] There is reason to seriously doubt this narrative cast in the language of Jesuit obedience. Sometime in 1601, two years before

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[37] The *Fasti* appeared in June 1607; the total number of copies acquired by Rosweyde included 25 free copies due to him as author. Godding, "L'Oeuvre hagiographique," 41.

[38] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 269. "Quia Superiorum consensu et suasu Fastos Sanctorum, seu specimen totius operis edidit, et toti orbi vulgavit, quo institutum eius et tot Sanctorum Historias tractandi ratio exprimitur. Qui Fasti in omnes orbis partes ad doctos viros missi sunt, ut viderent, si quid ad hoc institum conferre possent."

[39] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 263. "quae studia spectarent, et quo potissimum studii genere quis Ecclesiae prodesse, et Societatem illustrare posset."

[40] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 263. "A quo studio, si ita superioribus videretur, et otium daretur, se non abhorrere affirmabat."

Rosweyde's encounter with Manare, the Jesuit curia in Rome received his "idea for a work which set into motion the illustration of the lives of the Saints."[41] The letter in which Rosweyde set forth "on the utility and necessity of this sort of reading" has not survived; in his reply Acquaviva only expressed the pious but ineffective hope that the Jesuit's immediate superiors might release him from some of his other duties.[42]

Bollandist narratives have stressed how teaching assignments in Saint-Omer (1604–6), Courtrai (1610–12) and Antwerp (1607–9, 1612–29) distracted Rosweyde's efforts.[43] In this, they echoed Rosweyde's recurrent complaints. These accounts accept at face value Rosweyde's sense of victimhood (if not proverbial martyrdom), without recognizing that these repeated memoranda were an attempt to assert his mission in the face of opposition. It also fails to recognize that the failure to relieve Rosweyde of these duties was a symptom of that opposition. The ego documents produced by hagiographers are as revealing of contemporary attitudes as their saints' lives. It is with the same mindset that we should approach Bolland's original depiction of Rosweyde as a man too easily distracted from the blessed duty of hagiography by polemical compositions. Such a view misrepresents the more modest aims of Rosweyde's project and ignores, or sidesteps, the polemical purposes to which the saints, Christ's soldiers, could be put.

2. *A Teacher and His Disciple: Martin Delrio and Heribert Rosweyde*

Heribert Rosweyde entered the Society of Jesus in Douai on 21 May 1588. Little is known of the first nineteen years of his life. Ironically, given the context of this essay, no *vita* (in manuscript or in print) appears to have survived. According to most of the archival evi-

[41] Claudio Acquaviva to Heribert Rosweyde, 20 October 1601, Fl. Belg. 1-II, fol. 821, ARSI, Rome. "operis ideam quod molitus ad SS Vitas illustrandas."

[42] Acquaviva to Rosweyde, 20 October 1601. "de utilit[ate] et necessitate huiusmodi lectionis."

[43] Rosweyde's whereabouts can be followed through the Jesuit *Catalogi breves* and *Catalogi triennalis*. See the entries in: Fl Belg. 43; Fl. Belg. 44; Fl. Belg. 10; Fl. Belg. 11, ARSI, Rome. In 1622 Rosweyde calculated that he had taught poetry (one year), rhetoric (two), philosophy (two) and scholastic theology (four). He had also been a "consultor" for eight years and he "scripsit varia." Catalogus Triennalis 1622, fol. 1v, Fl. Belg. 11, ARSI.

dence (though not all) he was born in Utrecht on 20 January 1569.[44] Rosweyde's place of birth features prominently on the *Fasti*'s title page; his vernacular writings bemoan the heresy into which Utrecht had lapsed.[45] Rosweyde left for Douai nine years after the Union of Utrecht had marked the origins of the independent—and officially Reformed—Dutch Republic. Utrecht, however, possessed a lively Catholic minority of which the Rosweyde family formed a part.[46] Only one Utrecht-bound letter has survived, addressed to the humanist Dirk Canter (1545–1611). Dated as early as 1598, the letter already discussed editing an early Christian text by the apologist Arnobius, whom Canter had also edited. Rosweyde showed his preoccupation with polemic already at this early stage; he regaled his correspondent with recent successes in the Jesuit war against the prominent Huguenot scholar Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609).[47]

The University of Douai, meanwhile, was an obvious stepping point for Dutch and Flemish speaking students (regardless of their religious affiliation) who wished to practise their French on the provincials before moving onto Paris. It is possible, but unlikely, that Douai was the unexpected endpoint of an aborted grand tour.[48] Rosweyde's fellow Utrechter Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641) had embarked on a journey to Douai and Paris only a few years earlier

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[44] This is the date accepted by Willem Audenaert, *Prosopographia Iesuitica Belgica Antiqua* [henceforth, *PIBA*], 4 vols. (Leuven-Heverlee: Filosofisch en Theologische College SJ, 2000), 2:267 (who did not consult the Roman archives) and Catalogus triennalis 1628, Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 122v, ARSI, Rome. According to the *Catalogi triennales* of 1599 and 1622 (Fl. Belg. 9, fol. 300; Fl. Belg. 11, fol. 1v) Rosweyde was born in January 1570; the *Catalogus* of 1606 (Fl. Belg. 10, fols. 31–32) gives 1568 as Rosweyde's year of birth.

[45] Heribert Rosweyde, *Generale kerckelycke historie van de gheboorte onses H. Iesu Christi tot het iaer MDCXXIV* (Antwerp, 1623), sig. *i6r.

[46] Utrecht was, along with Haarlem, one of two centres of Catholic activity in the Dutch Republic. Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008), 17. Rosweyde's relatives married before the civic magistracy (rather than in the Reformed Church), suggesting strong Catholic family ties. See the notes gathered in the nineteenth century by J. H. Hofman: "Van Rosweyde," MS 1466, Collectie Rijsenburg, Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht.

[47] Heribert Rosweyde to Dirk Canter, 14 March 1598, Verzameling Van Buchel-Booth 21, fol. 92, Het Utrechts Archief, Utrecht; on Canter, see A.J. van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 3. (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1858), 121–24.

[48] A second Utrechter, Johannes van Gouda (1571–1630), was also admitted to the Society in Douai on the same day as Rosweyde. *PIBA*, 1:393.

and grew disenchanted with Catholicism as a result.[49] Another, who had once trodden the same path, was the Antwerp-born Martin Delrio.

Most of what we know about Martin Delrio's youth is derived from Rosweyde's not terribly reliable *Vita* and the scathing corrections made by Delrio's brother in the margins of one partial copy.[50] Nevertheless, the suffering of the Delrio family at the hands of the rebels is well documented. Martin Delrio, while an aide to the Spanish governor-general Don Juan of Austria, lost his personal library. His father Antonio del Río (d. 1585–86), deeply involved in the workings of the duke of Alba's notorious Council of Troubles, was imprisoned and died a penniless exile in Lisbon.[51] His son saw his political aspirations quashed by Don Juan's premature death and entered the Society in Valladolid on 9 May 1580. During the 1580s Delrio studied or taught at Jesuit Colleges in Léon, Bordeaux, Mainz and Leuven. It was just after Rosweyde's arrival to study philosophy at the Jesuit college of Douai that Delrio was made its professor of philosophy.

If Rosweyde had not yet come across *discretio spirituum* or the saints' lives collated by Surius he would soon be introduced to both; sometime in 1589 Martin Delrio held a public oration at Douai, discussing "whether spirits [of the dead] could ever appear?"[52] The affirmative answer was a foregone conclusion and fully aligned with Catholic orthodoxy, but Delrio's position on discernment of good and evil spirits may be surprising.[53] His opponents (Delrio identified John Calvin and Ludwig Lavater in the margin) objected that no statement on the matter could be made. "Satan is accustomed to turn himself into a man, indeed into an angel of light; how will we

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[49] Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999), 43–46.

[50] On these marginal comments and Delrio's early life, see Jan Machielsen, "Thinking with Montaigne: Evidence, Scepticism and Meaning in Early Modern Demonology," *French History* 25, no. 4 (2011): 427–52, here 432–37.

[51] On Antonio del Río, see: Octave Lemaire, "Antoine del Rio: Seigneur de Cleydael et Aertselaer, commerçant, mecène et fonctionnaire espagnol au XVI^{e} siècle," *De Schakel; Antwerpsche Kring voor Familiekunde*, 2 (1947): 111–19.

[52] Martin Delrio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* [henceforth, *Disq*], 3 vols. (Leuven, 1599–1600), 1:248. "Utrum unquam animae queant apparere?"

[53] On the confessional debate on spiritual apparitions, see Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 21–99.

distinguish him from true spirits? *Discretio spirituum* is a gift from God and not conceded to all."[54] Delrio conceded the difficulty but maintained that "nevertheless, the writings of erudite men lighting the way in this darkness are not lacking, so we do not stray dangerously."[55] The examples discussed were all taken from saints' lives, some from Surius. For Delrio, the discernment of past events was largely a foregone conclusion, having already been interpreted before. What remained, was deciding whether the dove in the life of St Gummarus, a local Flemish saint, was an angel, a devil, or simply a bird. But that discussion was problematic enough for Delrio to declare that in such cases, the profession of ignorance was the safer course of action, after all.[56]

The question raised by Ribadeneira—whether the events described actually took place—is only tangentially addressed in the final section. There, Delrio discussed spiritual apparitions organised by century (like Baronio's *Annales*, the first volume of which had appeared the preceding year). It again relied heavily on Lipomani and Surius, excerpting from them on nearly every page. [57] To those familiar with Rosweyde's later argument in favour of simplicity of style, Delrio's position is unsurprising. "We have already taught," he wrote of saints' lives, "that [apparitions] can happen, that it is fitting that they happen and are expedient. Why do we not believe these most saintly and earnest men, who recounted them simply and without embellishment, as events in their own character, but force even on the unwilling [the quality of] speaking in another's character?"[58]

In 1596, the two men were re-united and explored a very similar topic at the Jesuit College of Leuven. Rosweyde was now a second

[54] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:260. "Satan se solet in hominem, & adeo in lucis angelum transfigurare: quo illum pacto a veris spiritibus distinguemus? Dei donum est discretio spiritum, nec omnibus concessum."

[55] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:260. "Non deesse tamen hominum eruditorum scripta in his tenebris praelucentia, ne periculose aberremus."

[56] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:264.

[57] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:270–310.

[58] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:271. "fieri posse, fieri decere & expedire iam docuimus. cur igitur sanctissimis & gravissimis hominibus, ea simpliciter & sine fuco narrantibus, ut αὐτοπρόσωπως gesta, non credamus; sed vel invitis ἑτεροπροσωπίαν obtrudamus?" I am grateful to Adrian Kelly for discussing this passage with me and correcting the Greek, misspelled in the 1600 edition.

year student of theology, Delrio professor of exegesis.[59] They had stayed in touch by letter, and Delrio had introduced Rosweyde to Justus Lipsius, the famous Flemish humanist, in whose return Delrio had played some small part.[60] On 24 March 1597, Delrio and Rosweyde signed the *album amicorum* of the Scottish student William Barclay.[61] It was in this period that Delrio taught the course on "superstition and the evil arts," which later became his *Disquisitiones magicae* (Investigations into Magic, 1599–1600).[62] As we have already noted, Rosweyde (together with Lipsius) provided one of the prefatory poems to the *opus magnum*.

The *Disquisitiones* are still frequently regarded as an inquisitor's manual, inspired by first-hand experience of persecuting witches.[63] Yet, such personal experience is only noticeable by its absence. As I have argued elsewhere, we should see the *Disquisitiones* as a work of textual scholarship, one for which Delrio's edition of Senecan tragedy had already provided some exercise.[64] But if Seneca's Medea, represented as true history, provided Delrio with part of his evidence for witchcraft and demonic activity, an even larger role was

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[59] Catalogus Brevis 1596, Fl. Belg. 43, fol. 25r, ARSI, Rome.

[60] On the friendship of Delrio and Lipsius, see: Jan Machielsen, "Friendship and Religion in the Republic of Letters: The Return of Justus Lipsius to Catholicism (1591)," *Renaissance Studies* [pre-published on-line]; the letter from Lipsius to Rosweyde, in which the humanist described Delrio as someone "qui utrumque nostrum amat" is ILE VI 93 04 28 in the Lipsius correspondence; Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, ed. Jeanine de Landtsheer et al., 9 vols. [ILE I–III, V–VIII, XIII–XIV] (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1978–). Rosweyde printed an excerpt from this letter in his Delrio *Vita*; Hermannus Lange-veltius [Heribert Rosweyde], *Martini Antonii Del-Rio [. . .] Vita* (Antwerp, 1609), 45, as well as one letter he received from Delrio; Ibid., 32–33. A second Delrio letter included, sent "ad discipulum," was presumably directed to Rosweyde as well; Ibid., 23–24.

[61] Jan Papy, "The Scottish Doctor William Barclay, His *Album amicorum* and His Correspondence with Justus Lipsius," in *Myricae: Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Memory of Jozef IJsewijn,* ed. Dirk Sacré and Gilbert Tournoy (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2000), 333–96 (entries 22 and 28).

[62] One set of course notes has survived under this title. "De superstitione et malis artibus tractatus R.P. Martini Antonii Delrii Lovanii," MS 3632, Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Bibliothèque royale [henceforth, KBr], Brussels. The scribe, Franciscus Witspaen, was a student of the Jesuit College.

[63] This is the view of Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 101–4.

[64] Jan Machielsen, "'Marvellously Consistent throughout the Whole of Europe and across all Ages': The Nature of Evidence and the Decline of Witchcraft Belief," in *Crossing Frontiers: Belief in Magic and Witch-Hunting as Culture Transfer*, ed. Jürgen-Michael Schmidt and Katrin Moeller [forthcoming].

assigned to the lives of the saints. Edda Fischer, in her inventory of the *exempla* which Delrio excerpted, counted thirty (or over 10% of the total) from Surius alone.[65] The saints helped prove that the devil could temporarily adopt the form of the innocent, enchant animals, and deceive women about demonic flight.[66] By turning demonology into philology and history, the Jesuit evaded *discretio spirituum*. The *Disquisitiones* established, for those who accepted the truth of its varied collection of *exempla*, the theoretical reality of witchcraft, it offered very little by way of useful, practical advice.[67]

Also in 1600, Delrio published the *Commonitorium* composed by St Orientius (fl. 5th century AD), an early medieval poem which Baronio had feared lost. "It had been found and obtained through the diligence of our Heribert Rosweyde" and transcribed and edited by Delrio.[68] The Jesuit had expressed the hope that "if this work is approved, perhaps God will provide so that I may provide the other writings of other pious fathers which have not yet seen the light."[69] The next year Delrio published the work of St Aldhelm (ca. 639–709), another early medieval poet-bishop.[70]

In the final pages of his *Disquisitiones*, Delrio launched a polemic, defending one saint, Dionysius the Areopagite, against the sceptical Joseph Scaliger. Delrio was by no means the first Jesuit to attack Scaliger. Rosweyde, as we saw, had celebrated the wider Jesuit polemic two years earlier. The Huguenot scholar had questioned the veracity of the so–called Dionysian corpus, ascribed (in the sixth century) to Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian convert of Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34. The conflict was particularly venomous—it ended with Delrio composing a pamphlet disputing which of the two men was a beetle.[71] But in its less heated moments Delrio par-

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[65] Edda Fischer, *Die "Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex" von Martin Delrio als gegenreformatorische Exempel-Quelle* (Frankfurt: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1975), 127, 131–32.

[66] Delrio, *Disq*, 1:160, 1:174 (ref. to Jerome's life of Hilarion), 1:186 (lives of Macarius and Germanus).

[67] Machielsen, "Marvellously consistent."

[68] Martin Delrio, *S. Orientii Episcopi Illiberitani commonitorium* (Antwerp, 1600), 8. "inventum id diligentia Heriberti Rosueydi nostri, impetratumque."

[69] Delrio, *Commonitorium*, 8. "Si labor iste probatur, forte dabit Deus ut dem aliorum alia piorum Patrum scripta, quae nondum lucem adspexerunt."

[70] Martin Delrio, *S. Aldhelmi [. . .] poetica nonnulla* (Mainz, 1601).

[71] Martin Delrio, *Peniculus foriarum elenchi Scaligeriani* ([Antwerp], 1609), 101–8. The motto of this pamphlet was Proverbs 26:5; "Answer a fool according to his folly,

ticularly defended the possibility of texts resurfacing after many centuries. "How many books have lain hidden for many centuries which later came forth into the light?"[72] Delrio drew attention to the large number of recent discoveries made and published by Jesuits, including himself.[73] There can be little doubt that Rosweyde published Delrio's Dionysian pamphlets—they were written in Spain but appeared in Antwerp. In his memorandum, Rosweyde blamed the delay of his saints' project in part on his being charged with publishing the writings of fellow Jesuits.[74]

Delrio's interest in saints, their writings, and their lives therefore was long-standing. Having published saintly poetry together with Rosweyde, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate a mutual interest. It is in part through Rosweyde's notes that Delrio's writings made their way into the *Acta Sanctorum*.[75] The evidence to tie Delrio directly to the *Fasti Sanctorum*, however, is slender. Delrio left the Low Countries late in the summer of 1600, first for Austria, later for Spain; just under a year before Rosweyde contacted Rome. Only one mention of Delrio in these years has survived amid Rosweyde's scattered papers. Among the very few responses to the *Fasti* that have been preserved, is the enthusiastic reply of the Douai-born Jesuit, Antonius Laubegois (1572–1626).[76] Writing from Coimbra, he also thought to inform Rosweyde that "you will have heard, I believe, that Father Delrio is retained at [the Jesuit College of] Valladolid."[77]

With Rosweyde's other writings, we are on firmer ground. While teaching at the Jesuit College of Bordeaux in the 1580s, Delrio came across a manuscript written, or so it seemed, by one Evagrius the Deacon, "on the lives of the saintly monks who he saw in Egypt."[78] "A worthy author," Delrio commented in his notes on Senecan trag-

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lest he be wise in his own conceit."

[72] Martin Delrio, *Vindiciae Areopagiticae* (Antwerp, 1607), 31. "Quot enim libri multis saeculis latuerunt, qui postea prodierunt in lucem?"

[73] Delrio, *Vindiciae*, 31.

[74] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 266–67.

[75] A full-text search of the *Acta Sanctorum* database reveals that Delrio was cited in the dossiers of 21 saints; at least one of these references carries Rosweyde's stamp: *AS*, 2:129 "& ex eo Rosweydus hic."

[76] On Laubegois, see Audenaert, *PIBA*, 2:52.

[77] Antonius Laubegois to Heribert Rosweyde, 28 May 1608, MSS 8590–8599, fol. 125, KBr, Brussels. "Audiveritis credo P. Delrio Vallisoleti retineri."

[78] Martin Delrio, *Syntagma tragoediae latinae*, 3 vols. (Antwerp, 1593–94), 3:552. "tres libros de vita sanctorum Monachorum, quos in Aegypto vidit, conscripsit."

edy, "who should see the light at some point."[79] Delrio—wrongly—believed this collection of lives to be different from a relatively well-known collection called the *Vitae Patrum*.[80] This collection of lives of the Desert Fathers had appeared in print as early as 1475, falsely ascribed to Jerome. Rosweyde, when he published the first critical edition of the *Vitae Patrum* (1615, 2nd ed. 1628), pointed out and excused Delrio's error.[81] This edition, the one instance where Rosweyde put his plans into practice, also marked him out as Delrio's disciple. Rosweyde did not experience a sudden conversion to hagiography; his interests in hagiography were long-standing. They had been fostered by a teacher whose *Vita* he later composed.

3. *Heretical Saints and Textual Discernment*

On 12 May 1628, Heribert Rosweyde wrote to an unidentified clerical correspondent on a rather delicate matter—errors had crept into the Roman Martyrology, the result of mistakes made by none other than Cesare Baronio, the celebrated Church historian.[82] Catholics traced the origins of the *Martyrologium Romanum* (containing the liturgical offices of all saints, not just martyrs) back to Pope Clement in the first century AD.[83] A revised martyrology was imposed on the whole Catholic Church by Gregory XIII (pope 1572–85) as part of his wider project of calendar reform. This was no immaculate conception; Baronio revised (and annotated) the work twice under Sixtus V (pope 1585–90) and used it to advertise his *Annales Ecclesiastici*.[84] The impact of these attempts to standardise liturgy and worship were

[79] Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:552–53. "dignus scriptor, qui lucem aliquando aspiciat."

[80] Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:553. "alius omnino ab illo cuius feruntur a nonnullis Patrum vitae."

[81] Heribert Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum: De vita et verbis seniorum sive historiae eremeticae libri X*, 2nd ed. (Antwerp, 1628), xvi.

[82] Heribert Rosweyde to an unknown clerical correspondent, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fols. 407–430, Museum Plantin-Moretus [henceforth, MPM], Antwerp. The salutation, "R[everen]de in Xr[ist]o Pater," strongly suggests a fellow Jesuit. For a very useful introduction to Baronio's scholarship, see Giuseppe Antonio Guazzelli, "Cesare Baronio and the Roman Catholic Vision of the Early Church," in Van Liere et al., *Sacred History*, 52–71.

[83] e.g., Caesare Baronio, ed., *Sacrum Martyrologium Romanum* (Cologne, 1590), ii; Ribadeneira, *Flos sanctorum*, sig. ¶5v.

[84] Baronio, *Sacrum Martyrologium Romanum*, sig. +2rv; see also Machielsen, "The Counter Reformation."

felt across the Church. Simon Ditchfield has studied how local *Baronii* sought to accommodate locally venerated saints within this newly enforced, universal framework.[85] Yet, for Antwerp savants the Roman Martyrology contained, if anything, too many rather than too few saints. In 1620, Rosweyde's collaborator Aubertus Miraeus, confronted with the prospect of another round of additions, exclaimed; "But really! If the Romans proceed in this fashion, we will shortly have a Martyrology that is twice as large."[86]

For Rosweyde eight years later, the problem was another set of additions. More precisely, it was Baronio's (mis-)use of the Greek Menology, which had led the historian to translate saints of dubious legitimacy into the Roman Martyrology. Menologies were akin to breviaries in the Roman tradition. They were of liturgical importance first and of historical relevance second. Although Rosweyde wrote with obvious restraint, it is clear that Baronio's misreadings were troubling him. St Martha included on 20 September, for instance, "is not a saint and companion of St Susanna, but rather her mother who died in impiety."[87] Another, non-Menology related inclusion was, in the Jesuit's eyes, even more egregious. Baronio had taken one St Rutilius from Tertullian, a particularly problematic early Church Father in terms of orthodoxy.[88]

> What if, as this Rutilius has never appeared in the Roman Martyrology [i.e., before Baronio], someone begins to doubt whether he truly is a Martyr! For when Tertullian, being already a Montanist, calls Rutilius a most sacred Martyr, does it appear probable that a heretic himself wished to give a Roman Catholic the title of saint? It could therefore be that Rutilius was perhaps a Montanist. I timidly suggest that this may appear worthy of consideration.[89]

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[85] Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity, and History.*

[86] Aubertus Miraeus to Heribert Rosweyde, 31 October 1620. Bernard Joassart, "Un lettre inédite d'Aubert Le Mire à Héribert Rosweyde," in *Analecta Bollandiana; Revue critique d'hagiographie*, 124, no. 1 (2006): 44. "Sed heus! Si sic pergunt Romani, duplo auctius brevi habebimus Martyrologium." On Miraeus's assistance to Rosweyde: *AS*, xliii.

[87] Letter by Rosweyde, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fol. 423, MPM, Antwerp. "Hic Martha non est sancta et socia S. Susannae, sed potius mater eius, quae in impietate obiit."

[88] On the ambivalent reception of Tertullian in the early modern period, see: Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 152–72.

[89] Letter by Rosweyde, 12 May 1628, Arch. 76, fol. 408. "Quid si quispiam, cum

Rosweyde put forward here one, perhaps unusual version of the problem of discernment. Until the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the Roman Martyrology was read every morning in the Divine Office at Prime. Rosweyde's suggestion that the Church may have worshipped "impious" heretics was itself therefore potentially subversive, and if the epistle was ever sent to Rome, it fell on deaf ears.[90]

Rosweyde's anxieties concerning the Roman Martyrology were long-standing. In 1613, Rosweyde published an edition of the Martyrology, to which he appended an early medieval counterpart. The previous summer he returned to his printer, Balthasar Moretus, a copy of the Roman Martyrology which he had corrected for this publication:

> See here the Martyrology of Baronio, and I thank you for its use. I have repeatedly corrected definite (*certas*) errors in numbers, and such things. Other graver ones I have kept to myself, on which another time. Because I would not dare anything in this, except with the agreement of the Romans.[91]

It is very well possible that Rosweyde gave expression to these long-held sentiments in 1628, when the Martyrology was undergoing revision in Rome.[92] Rosweyde's focus is instructive. He did not question the truth of the original sources, only their interpretation; for Rosweyde a concern for truth had been transplanted by a concern for orthodoxy. A pre-occupation with the latter made other forms of discernment immaterial.

Rutilius hic nunquam in Romano Martyrologio comparuerit, dubitare incipiat, an vere Martyr sit! Nam cum Tertullianus iam Montanista existens Rutilium vocet sanctissimum Martyrem, verone simile videtur, quod Romano-Catholicum sanctitatis nomine ipse haereticus afficere voluerit? fuerit igitur Rutilius hic forte Montanista. Hoc timide suggero, ut videatur an consideratione dignum sit."

[90] Rutilius remains included; *Martyrologium Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti oecumenici concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatum* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2001), 408. Both Martha and her pious daughter Susanna were removed some time after the eighteenth century. They were still present in *Martyrologium Romanum* (Venice, 1792), 186.

[91] Heribert Rosweyde to Balathasar Moretus, 29 August 1612, Arch. 92, fol. 795, MPM, Antwerp. "Ecce Martyrologium Baronii, et gratias ago pro usura. Subinde certos errores numerorum et similium correxi. Alia graviora mihi servavi, de quibus alias. Nec enim ausim quidquam in iis, sine Romanorum consensu."

[92] A revised Martyrology was published under Urban VIII in 1630: Hippolyte Delehaye, "Martyrology," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09741a.htm.

By contrast, the main concerns which faced Jean Bolland were precisely these more easily imagined ones: first, whether the events recounted in the sources actually took place, and second, the traditional problem of *discretio spirituum*, whether events and visions were divinely inspired or of demonic origin. It was the first concern, which particularly pre-occupied Rosweyde's self-styled successor. Bolland claimed that his method of editing saints' lives, which he contrasted with Rosweyde's method of *non*-editing, restored faith in their veracity. Bolland was particularly pleased with how well his method had coped with the Bishop of Glasgow, St Kentigern (d. ca. 612).[93] Bolland had prefaced the flawed, medieval saints' life with an introduction for which he had collated the remaining evidence for the saint's birth, parentage, age, and writings (but, crucially, no miracles).[94] In other words, Bolland established a historical core to the saint that could not be doubted and that, in his view, would bolster the saint's authenticity. While setting out his method in the general introduction, the Jesuit offered the Kentigern preface as evidence for his success.

> I asked a certain man, very learned and well-versed in the writers of English affairs, when he had a conversation with me on the lives of the saints, what he thought about John Capgrave (1393–1464) or his *Sanctorum Angliae Legenda* [Legends of English Saints]. He either wrote fables on the most saintly men, he said, or collected them. "You disapprove of all of them then?" "The majority," he said. I [Bolland] admit that those foolishly and incompetently written texts, which I do not wish, exist. But what does he think of Kentigern? He was, he said, a man of apostolic life (*vir Apostolicus*) but his life swarms with inventions. After I asked what he would reject above all, I offered to let him read what was already composed by me, asking him to cast his light [upon it]. When he had read it, he said, "many divine histories that have so far been scorned will be pleasing to the erudite, when they will be illustrated in this way, even though nothing is blander than style (*stylus*)."[95]

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[93] On Kentigern, see Dauvit Broun, "Kentigern (d. 612x14)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15426, who doubts whether there was even a diocese of Glasgow in this period.

[94] *AS*, 815–16.

[95] *AS*, xxiv. "Vir quidam eruditissimus, & in Anglicanarum rerum Scriptoribus versatissimus, cum mecum de Sanctorum Vitis haberet sermonem, rogatus a me est, quid de Ioanne Capgrauio, eiusve Sanctorum Angliae Legenda sentiret. De sanc-

Bolland's principle of discernment lies in an appeal to credibility and communal consensus of, at least, the well-educated. Bolland realized that an appeal to probability would falter in the face of the miraculous or, as he happily conceded, ridiculous events recounted. "I admit that what the most stupid demons have plotted to shake the constancy of the Saints in the pursuit of prayer and other virtues is ridiculous. You may be uncertain whether this was more out of [the demons'] madness or [their] cunning, but I deny that it is ridiculous to recount them."[96] Even if they were ridiculous, they were certainly not incredible. Bolland claimed that "if Livy or Sallust had reported that this had happened, you would have believed it, I think, but you would have said they had been done by demonic illusions."[97] It is a comment that is not only hugely revealing of early modern attitudes towards classical sources but also of the apparent similarity of demonic and divine that so troubled contemporaries.

It is clear, then, that of the two concerns—the actuality of the events described and their meaning (the actual *discretio spirituum*)—it is the former that Bolland felt most in need of defending. Bolland remained concerned, even when discussing miraculous events, with the fact that they might be entirely discounted, rather than that they might be demonic in origin. Certainly, the fact that these saints were recognized by the Church mitigated concerns for the latter. But Bolland acknowledged the fundamental issues involved. Miracles could never be instantly dismissed, not even on grounds of a stupendous quantity of eery similarility. Bolland defended the abundance of miracles in the British Isles "because truly in working wonders of this sort, God accommodates himself to the simplicity and faith of men," and the particular simplicity of life of the inhab-

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tissimis hominibus, inquit, fabulas vel scripsit, vel collegit. Omniane ergo, inquam, improbas? Pleraque, ait. Fateor esse quae ita imperite ac inepte scripta nollem: at de Kentigerno quid videtur? Fuit, inquit, vir Apostolicus, sed figmentis scatet vita. Sciscitatus quid praecipue reiiceret, quae iam a me excusa de eo erant, legenda obtuli, rogaui ut afferret lucem. Cum legisset, Multae, inquit, spretae hactenus Diuorum historiae, vbi sic erunt illustratae, etsi stylo nil insipidius, arridebunt tamen eruditis."

[96] *AS,* xxxviii. "Ridicula sunt fateor quae stolidissimi daemones ad Sanctorum labefactandam in precandi studio aliisque virtutibus constantiam machinati sunt, dubites maiori furore an vafritie: nego tamen ridiculum esse ea narrari."

[97] *AS,* xxxviii. "Si Livius aut Salustius haec narraret accidisse, crederes, opinor, sed daemonum praestigiis facta diceres."

itants of these isles—"or else certainly because of their more simple authors."[98] And he admitted that the same type of miracles were often ascribed to multiple saints. This could be due to the weakness of human memory (which led to confusing saints with each other), but similar saints were tested in a similar fashion. Given God's greatness and goodness, "these [events] may not perhaps have been done, but greater things could have been done by God and others have been done [by Him]. Beware, therefore, of denying deeds because they could not or should not have happened."[99]

In the face of these difficulties the responsibility for discernment devolves onto the reader. And Bolland seeks to instil him with courage, given the power and efficacy of truth. "Not even that of wine is as great, although that also drives the wise mad; nor that of a king, on whose command the life and death of his people is dependent; nor that of a woman, whose vehement love is accustomed to lead to madness."[100] The reader was told not to fear inconsequential mistakes and not be afraid to err. "What does it matter whether St George killed a true dragon or a metaphorical one?"[101] This way Bolland shifted part of the responsibility for discernment onto the fearless reader. The *Acta* were variously a source (*fons*), a mine, and a forest. Bolland had identified the seam of raw material, but it was up to the reader to mine and purify the material and exchange the proceeds for eternal rewards with the celestial treasury.[102] The hagiographer is too visible in Bolland's account for the lives to be a transparent eyeglass, another common metaphor, but Bolland had set great store on the efficacy of these texts—and of the divine—to inspire their reader on a level well-removed from reason, in the way

[98] *AS*, xxxiv. "Quia vero in eiusmodi patrandis prodigiis sese fere simplicitati ac fidei hominum Deus attemperat;" "vel certe quia simpliciores Scriptores."

[99] *AS*, xxxiv. "ea facta non sint fortassis: at fieri maiora potuere a Deo, & facta alias. Cave igitur ideo neges facta, quia fieri non potuerint aut debuerint."

[100] *AS*, xxxviii. "Nosti quae vis & efficacitas sit veritatis, quanta neque vino inest, licet etiam sapientes dementet; neque Regi, cuius tamen nutu vita morsque subiecti populi constat; neque mulieri, cuius solet esse amor ad insaniam vehemens." The first part of the comparison is a reference to the Latin proverb "in vino veritas." e.g., Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 14:141. I am grateful to Juliane Kerkhecker for this reference.

[101] *AS*, xxxviii. "Occiderit S. Georgius draconem verum, an metaphoricum, quid interest?"

[102] *AS*, xxv.

they had once moved Ignatius.[103] Prominent Protestant scholars, such as William Camden (1551–1623) and Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649), had used saints' lives seriously in their studies, and Bolland hoped for a very similar, beneficial effect on them. "If only at some point their minds are stirred up by this reading, so that they might finally surrender their hands, souls, and pens to Catholic concord and charity."[104]

I argue that the profound differences in attitude towards heresy expressed by Rosweyde and Bolland explains their different approach to textual discernment. Bolland prayed for their conversion, but he refused to inveigh "more sharply" against the heretics.[105] Heretics mocked saints' lives, it was true but, he wrote, "we do not write for them."[106] It was the conversion of heretics, not their defeat that Bolland sought; Bolland's writings differed sharply from Rosweyde's but equally had a confessional purpose. As we have seen before when we assessed Rosweyde's struggle with his superiors, there is a purposeful tendency to separate different strands that properly belong together. Bolland disapproved of Rosweyde's polemics—they were works which he "gladly" (*lubens*) passed over—and he criticised Rosweyde's editorial approach to saints' lives.[107] These two facets of Rosweyde's thought can only be criticised as frivolous and incoherent when considered separately.

Unlike the *Acta Sanctorum*, the intent of the *Fasti Sanctorum* was polemical. Whereas Bolland in his opening paragraphs stressed the importance of hagiography in its own right, Rosweyde's mind never strayed far from the fight with heretics.[108] "There is," he concluded a lengthy argument, "no healthier, no easier medicine to the wounds [inflicted by] the heretics, than the life, struggle, and death of the saints."[109] Bolland, in his prayer, did refer to saints' lives confirming Catholic dogma, but for Rosweyde the confirmation and

[103] *AS*, xxxviii. On the image of saints as eyeglasses to be looked *through* rather than *at*, see Massimo Leone, *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 4.

[104] *AS*, xxxviii. "Utinam eorum aliquando ista lectione commoueantur mentes, ut tandem Catholicae caritati & concordiae manus, animos, calamos dedant."

[105] *AS*, lix–lx; xxx. "acrius in eos non invehor."

[106] *AS*, xxxviii. "Illis non scribimus."

[107] *AS*, x.

[108] *AS*, xiii.

[109] *FS*, 7. "Ita non salubrior, non facilior Haereticorum vulneri medicina, quam SS. vita, pugna, mors."

defence of Catholicism took centre stage.[110] In the *Fasti*, the imagery of the saints is used to full, violent effect.

> Truly, [heretics] shudder at the cult of sacred relics in the case of the Martyr, the vow of chastity in the case of the Virgin, and the uninterrupted course (*tenor*) of Ecclesiastical rites in the Confessor. And the rose of the Martyrs therefore punctures with its thorn the wicked evil-doer, the lily of the Virgins blinds the eyes of the enchanted with its radiance, the violet of the Confessors with its odour kills the poisonous toads.[111]

Late in life Rosweyde described his polemical ventures, which Bolland considered distractions, as "leaving therefore the sepulchres (*armariis*) of the saints, I turned myself to their arsenals (*armamentaria*)."[112]

In contrast to Bolland's editorial approach, Rosweyde's was marked by the conviction that the only obstacle had been their editing so far. Rosweyde's method was philological; limited to criticism of Surius's concerns for style and saintly vestments. In the *Fasti* he outlined a two-step process: "first, to seek out from everywhere the lives published by others, such as Lipomani, Surius, etc." and "second, to confer the same lives with the manuscripts and old books."[113] And this, for the "two-fold reason" (*caussa duplici*) of unwarranted concern for style and for the omission (read:

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[110] *AS*, lx.

[111] *FS*, 6. "Nempe horrent in Martyre sacrarum Reliquiarum cultum, in Virgine Castitatis votum, in Confessore tenorem Ecclesiasticorum rituum. Ita Martyrum rosa nefarium temeratorem spina sua pungit, lilia Virginum candore suo fascinantium oculos praestinguunt, Confessorum viola odore suo venenatas rubetas exanimat."

[112] Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum*, sig. *6r. "Relictis igitur Sanctorum armariis ad Sancitorum armamentaria me converti." The choice for "sancitorum," an unusual neologism, is an odd one. Ecclesiastical Latin had coined the word "sancitus" (hallowed, ratified) as the perfect participle of "sancio," in order to avoid the inevitable confusion with "sanctus" (the original participle) but I have not been able to find a single instance of this participle in the genitive plural elsewhere. Nevertheless, Rosweyde's word play higlights interchangeability of "sanctus" and "sancitus," and the link between the two words was perfectly clear. See, for instance, the following comment by a contemporary of Rosweyde in relation to St Francis of Assisi: Laurentius a Brundusio, *Opera omnia*, vol. 9, *Sanctorale* (Padua: Officina typographica seminarii, 1944), 173. "Latine dicitur sanctus quasi sancitus, confirmatus, nam sanctus est qui in fide, spe et caritate confirmatus est." Originally retrieved from the Library of Latin Texts (Brepolis).

[113] *FS*, 11. "i. Conquirere undique vitas ab aliis editas, ut Aloysio, Surio, &c. ii. Easdem vitas cum MS. & veteribus libris conferre."

suppression) of prologues, miracles, and more obscure facts.[114] Rosweyde's plan, as set out in the *Fasti*, was for unmediated access to (early) medieval prose, with the notes relegated to two separate volumes of "illustrations," only the first of which would offer "annotations."[115] In his response to Rosweyde, Robert Bellarmine worried that the original documents would inspire "laughter rather than edification."[116] Rosweyde was not swayed. To the charge that the original lives contained "many fables and digressions," he conceded that "he did not plan to reinsert [what was] well excised by Surius," but, he continued, his plan remained "to recall the acts of the martyrs and lives of the saints to their original and genuine style so that faith in their antiquity and simplicity shall remain."[117] Doubting these writings, even in part, would be a concession to the heretics.

Rosweyde's philological approach may seem unsophisticated; it certainly was void of all discernment, which, by its very essence, was an act of separating truth from specious appearance. From Bolland's perspective it was deficient in many ways; the relegation of notes to a separate volume and the absence of saints who lacked a *vita* were especially criticised.[118] Bolland, as we saw, was much less enamoured with the idea of unmediated access to medieval texts. Ending his example of his reworked Life of St Kentigern, Bolland concluded with either irony or false humility: "What would then have happened if Rosweyde himself with his singular erudition had set out and embellished (*ornassetque*) the same? How much more prominent would the brilliance of truth be, thus far obscured or corrupted by some barbarism of the times!"[119] This end result was in any case, as Rosweyde's criticism makes clear, not something he

[114] *FS*, 11.

[115] *FS*, 8–9.

[116] Robert Bellarmine to Heribert Rosweyde, 7 March 1608. Charles De Smedt, "Les Fondateurs du Bollandisme," in *Mélanges Godefroid Kurth*, 2 vols. (Liège: Vaillant-Carmanne, 1908), 1:295–303, here 1:297–98. "risum potius quam aedificationem."

[117] Rosweyde, "Plan conçu," 268. "Nec enim statuit bene a Surio recisa rursus inserere, sed acta martyrum et vitas sanctorum ad germanum et genuinum stylum revocare, ut sua antiquitati et sinceritati stet fides."

[118] *AS*, xxiii–xxiv.

[119] *AS*, xxiv. "Quid si ergo ipse ea sua singulari eruditione digessisset ornassetque Rosweydus, quanto illustrior emicuisset obscuratae hactenus aut nescio qua temporum barbarie infuscatae splendor veritatis?"

would have had in mind.

When seen in the light of Rosweyde's editorial principles, Rosweyde's criticism of Baronio's additions to the Roman Martyrology is less surprising. The Jesuit's concern for possibly heretical saints was linked to his faith in the original material. Baronio, whom Rosweyde had translated into Dutch, defended against the Huguenot scholar Isaac Casaubon, and invariably quoted in prefaces and general introductions, had been led astray by an anthology, not an original source.[120] Having studied Rosweyde's approach, we can now also discern the full extent of his debt to Delrio. In insisting on a form of philology based solely on the comparison of manuscripts, Rosweyde had followed principles set out in Delrio's edition of Senecan tragedy—there, Delrio had likened speculative emendation, not based on manuscript evidence, to divination.[121] Contemporaries generally saw divination as a positive metaphor for philological prowess; for instance, a Protestant correspondent had described Joseph Scaliger as "an oracle, not a God" to a bemused Rosweyde.[122] For Delrio, the connotation was strongly negative; a stance he reiterated in the Orientius edition on which Rosweyde and Delrio had worked together.

> I have put conjectures for emendations in the margin [of the book], and I supplied notes shedding some light on the book, being careful that I do not assign too much to audacious divination. It is better for certain things to be left intact, than for new wounds to be inflicted.[123]

Rosweyde also followed Delrio's praise of stylistic simplicity. Delrio had insisted that every genre had its own style and that theologians

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[120] For Rosweyde's defence of Baronio, see Heribert Rosweyde, *Lex Talionis XII tabularum* (Antwerp, 1614); his translation of Henri de Sponde's epitome of the *Annales Ecclesiastici*: Rosweyde, *Generale kerckelycke historie*; for praise of Baronio, e.g., *FS*, 11.

[121] Such charges are to be found throughout Delrio's notes, to offer just one example: Delrio, *Syntagma*, 3:46.

[122] Petrus Scriverius to Heribert Rosweyde, ca. 1602. (Letter 13) Antonius Matthaeus, *Veteris aevi analecta seu vetera monumenta*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (The Hague, 1738), 704–9, here 704–5. "oraculum, non Deum, Scaligerum." Rosweyde's critical reply has not been preserved but some of its contents may be deduced from Scriverius's answer. See ibid., 712–16 (Letter 12; the numbering of the letters is not consecutive).

[123] Delrio, *Commonitorium*, 8. "coniecturas emendationum in marginem reieci, & libello Notulas lucis aliquid adlaturas subieci, cavens ne nimis audaci divinationi tribuerem. praestat quaedam intacta relinqui, quam nova vulnera infligi."

should imitate and adopt a simple, Christian writing style. It was a passage the disciple copied out at length in his teacher's *Vita*.[124]

For Rosweyde—and Delrio—, veracity was not a cause for concern because heresy had substituted falsehood. Either a text was true or it was heretical. If it was conducive to Catholic doctrine, one could not possibly deny its authenticity. Rosweyde's saints bore witness to, and defended, relics, celibacy, and Church rites but, by virtue of their opposition, so did the heretics. Catholic truth and heretical falsehood were complementary. While Catholics pursued the lives of the saints, "our heretics attacked all others, [proceeding] on an altogether different road towards impiety."[125] By eschewing divination, by turning discernment into the simple collation of available manuscripts, the hagiographer ought to have disappeared from view. But the polemical attitude that inspired the literal, philological approach to saints' lives impeded such transparency. As committed Catholics, who themselves had suffered for their faith, Delrio and Rosweyde became the arbiters of a new standard of evidence, defined by their personal opposition to heresy. Theirs was a mentality forged during civil war and exile.

Simon Ditchfield has already noted that the *Fasti Sanctorum* emerged, not from Catholicism's Mediterranean heartlands, but from the fragile frontiers of the Roman Catholic world.[126] This is an important insight, and the same observation holds true, of course, for the *Acta*. It should, however, be pointed out that a generational gulf separated Bolland, born when Catholicism had confidently reasserted itself in the Southern Netherlands, from his predecessors.[127] The *Vitae Sanctorum* project espoused by Rosweyde emerged at a particular junction in time and place, where late humanist philology and religious polemic overlapped. Rosweyde was not "distracted" by polemic from hagiography; the *Fasti* themselves had clear polemical overtones. Rosweyde's impact on the editorial

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[124] Cf. [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 33–34, and, Martin Delrio, *Florida Mariana, sive de laudibus sacratissimae virginis deiparae panegyrici XIII* (Antwerp, 1598), 7–8.

[125] *FS*, 4. "Alia omnia Haeretici nostri, alia omnino via ad impietatem grassantur."

[126] Ditchfield, "Thinking with Saints," 574–75.

[127] On the emergence of a distinctly Catholic identity in the Spanish Netherlands, see Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); and on the role played by Jesuits: Jos Andriessen, *De Jezuïeten en het samenhorigheidsbesef der Nederlanden, 1585–1648* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1957).

practice of the *Acta Sanctorum* was, as we have seen, fairly limited. His certainty was replaced with the possibility of doubt and an emphasis on the faith both of the reader and, as we shall see, the hagiographer. It is tempting therefore to relegate these early efforts to the sidelines. But Bolland, I suggested, enlarged Rosweyde's role for reasons to do with the sacred nature of hagiography, and it is to the representation of the hagiographer that we must now turn. Paradoxically, it is here that Bolland's greatest debt to his predecessor lies.

4. *Saint and Hagiographer*

"The death of the just is an aid to the good, and a testimony to the bad; because from it the evil may perish without being excused, and the elect take it as an example so they may live."[128] The motto, which Rosweyde had picked for his *Martini Antonii Del-Rio […] Vita* (Life of Martinus Antonius Delrio, 1609) was suitably polemical. Perhaps, it was more to point out the polemical intent than to seriously obscure his authorship that the work appeared under a pseudonym.[129] Even when composing the Delrio *Vita*, saints were not far from Rosweyde's mind. In the *Vita*, Rosweyde stressed the importance of their imitation. Rosweyde maintained that Delrio had

[128] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, sig. *4v. "Mors Iustorum bonis est in adiutorium, malis in testimonium; ut inde perversi sine excusatione pereant, unde electi exemplum capiunt, ut vivant." The provenance is curious in light of Rosweyde's professed attachment to primary sources. Rosweyde cites Gregory the Great on Matthew 10 as his source. The passage in Gregory, however, relates to an explication of Luke 21:9–19: Gregory the Great, "Homilia XXXV," *XL homiliarum in Evangelia libri duo*, book 2, in *Patrologia latina*, series secunda, vol. 76 (Paris: Migne, 1849–55), 1259–65, here col. 1261A. Available through the *Patrologia Latina Database* (ProQuest), http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk. Rosweyde seems to have relied on an anthology, possibly Thomas Hibernicus, *Flores omnium pene doctorum, qui tum in theologia, tum in philosophia hactenus claruerunt* (Cologne, 1577), 605 (easily found under the heading "mors"). Cf. Rosweyde's "D. Gregor. in X. Matth." with the marginal note "Gre. super Mat. 10 In testim. illis, &c."

[129] As indicated above in footnote 60, the *Vita* contains both excerpts from letters by Justus Lipsius and Martin Delrio to Rosweyde. The pseudonym Hermannus Lange-veltius is reminiscent of Heribert Rosweyde's name—both "veld" and "weide" are a "field" in Dutch. The MPM archives also show Rosweyde buying copies of the work alongside additional copies of the *Fasti*: e.g., Sales Catalogue 1609, 31 August 1609, Arch. 216, fol. 144v, MPM, Antwerp, where Rosweyde buys three copies of the *Vita* and one copy of the *Fasti*.

followed the example of John of Damascus (ca. 645–749) so closely that the process was akin to soul migration.[130] Like John, Delrio had fought the iconoclasts. Heretics feared Delrio, more than the Greeks had feared Hector and the Trojans Achilles.[131] Also like John, Delrio had been an ardent follower of the Virgin Mary.[132] And like John, the Jesuit, born for the magistracy, turned to a religious vocation late in life, "as if a young novice, becom[ing] a boy again for Christ's sake."[133] The reader was invited to reflect on and participate in this imitative chain. Delrio, who had imitated, was now in turn worthy of imitation. "They, who with St Paul are 'fools for Christ's sake' [1 Corinthians 4:10], when they read these [texts], admire the virtues of these men [John and Delrio] and are stimulated by a form of useful rivalry to represent those deeds with their own actions."[134]

Imitation was an age-old Christian practice. In a later passage then cited by Rosweyde, Paul had already enjoined the Corinthians: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) It is a passage that Surius, among others, had adapted in his defence of the worship of saints.[135] To draw out the particular excellence of Christian imitation, Bolland opened with the pagan example of Julius Caesar's emulation of Alexander the Great.[136]

> Truly, these [examples] are a great deal more frequent and illustrious among Christians. How few undertake anything great, who do not propose to themselves an example of one out of the rank of saints? Who, when he hears their deeds commemorated, is not inflamed by the desire to emulate them?[137]

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[130] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 15.
[131] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 16.
[132] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 17.
[133] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 20. "quasi novellus repuerascere propter Christum."
[134] [Rosweyde], *Vita*, 21. "qui cum Apostolo *stulti propter Christum*, haec dum legunt, illorum virorum admirantur virtutes, & utili quadam aemulatione stimulantur ad eorum gesta suis factis adumbranda."
[135] Laurentius Surius, *De Vitis Sanctorum*, vol. 1 (Venice, 1571), unpaginated folio preface (verso). "Imitatores nostri estote, sicut & nos Christi." On the medieval use of this passage, see Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 215.
[136] *AS*, xiii.
[137] *AS*, xiii. "Verum haec apud Christianos multo & frequentiora sunt & clariora. Quotusquisque magnum aliquid suscipit, qui non alicuius sibi e Caelitum numero proponat exemplum? Quis cum eorum audit commemorari facinora, non inflammatur aemulandi cupiditate?"

Saints were always more than intercessors with Christ; they were his imitators, who in turn were to be imitated. Not surprisingly, the imitative aspect of sanctity created a sizable number of similar (would-be) saints.[138] Saints were always to be admired *and* imitated—the precise balance between these actions, however, was subject of dispute already in the Middle Ages.[139]

Aside from the polemical purposes to which imitation could be put, there are two other factors that explain the further emphasis on imitation in Rosweyde's work. Jesuit spirituality laid great stress on the importance of imitation; Ignatius of Loyola himself recalled wondering, as he embarked on his path towards sainthood: "What if I should do what St Francis did? What if I should act like St Dominic?"[140] Bolland had joined the Society of Jesus after reading Orazio Torsellino's life of Francis Xavier (1506–52), although he appears to have lacked any desire for overseas evangelising.[141] For Rosweyde, we may wonder whether his discipleship was in itself an act of imitation; according to Rosweyde, Delrio had become an example to be imitated.

Imitative techniques were also given fresh impetus in the late medieval Netherlands by the lay religious movement known as the *Devotio Moderna*.[142] Its most popular meditative text, the *Imitatio Christi*—the most popular spiritual book after the Bible, according to the early twentieth-century *Catholic Encyclopedia*—was edited, republished in Latin and translated into Dutch by Heribert Rosweyde.[143] Imitation was part of, but also moved beyond Rosweyde's polemical interests (although, not surprisingly, the *Imitatio* was subject to a polemical exchange as well).[144] The motto of the *Fasti*

[138] Gábor Klaniczay, "Legends as Life Strategies for Aspirant Saints in the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Folklore Research* 26, no. 2 (1989): 151–71.

[139] Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 42–46.

[140] Ignatius of Loyola, *The Autobiography*, 25–26.

[141] *AS*, xiv.

[142] On the use of the Desert Fathers within the *Devotio Moderna*, see Mathilde van Dijk, "Disciples of the Deep Desert: Windesheim Biographers and the Imitation of the Desert Fathers," *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. 1 (2006): 257–89.

[143] Thomas a Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi libri quatuor*, ed. Heribert Rosweyde (Antwerp, 1617). On its popularity, see "Imitation of Christ," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* vol. 7, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674c.htm.

[144] The polemic was directed against a fellow Catholic, the Benedictine monk (and custodian of the Vatican Library) Constantin Cajetan (1560–1650), who had

project likened the contemplation and imitation of the saints to the activity of painters, who "when they paint from other pictures, constantly look at the model, and do their best to transfer its lineaments to their own work."[145] As already suggested, imitation seems at first sight at odds with Rosweyde's philological approach to saints' lives—these texts were no longer dead, the act of "painting" brought them back to life.

The emphasis on imitation also sets into relief Rosweyde's own role and the personal sanctity of the hagiographer. As we have seen, the Jesuit portrayed himself as working almost single-handedly for "the glorification of the Catholic Church." The analogy of the painter applies to the reader of saints' lives mentally visualising their deeds, but it was particularly apt for their editor literally copying them. The Jesuit wrote that he intended to imitate the practices of painters to establish the most life-like portraits. Rosweyde's correspondents should warn him if any painting or colour was lacking in his planned "Ecclesiastical picture gallery."[146] The hagiographer as painter reproduced—imitated—the acts of the saints. While Bolland ignored the polemic that made up the bulk of Rosweyde's introduction, he cited this passage at length.[147]

Yet, the role of hagiographer was more than imitative. Rosweyde's central realization, with which he opened the *Fasti Sanctorum*, was that sanctity, for it to be known, required a witness and a pen:

> Those who desire [to leave] a name among posterity, have two [things] above all in their prayers; an erudite pen, and a [painter's]

attributed the *De Imitatione* to a fellow Benedictine, the Italian abbot Giovanni Gersen. On the controversy, see Maximilian Von Habsburg, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), 196–97. On Cajetan, see Jean-Pierre Niceron, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la république*, vol. 25 (Paris, 1734), 202–11. The tone of Rosweyde's attack was not appreciated in Rome. Mutio Vitelleschi to Heribert Rosweyde, 20 May 1617, Fl. Belg. 3, fol. 342, ARSI, Rome.

[145] *FS*, [2]. "Quemadmodum pictores, cum imaginem ex imagine pingunt, exemplar identidem respectantes, lineamenta eius transferre conantur magno studio ad suum opificium." The reference is to "D. Basil. Ep. 1. ad Gregorium Theologum." The translation is taken from Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit; Select Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Mace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 110–12, here 111 (letter 2, para. 3).

[146] *FS*, 7. "Ecclesiasticam hanc pinacothecam."

[147] *AS*, xxii.

Figure 4.1. Frontispiece of the *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 1 (Antwerp, 1643). Reproduced with permission from Jesus College, Oxford.

> brush or a malleable chisel. By the former the better part of man, the virtue of the mind is propagated, by the latter the glory of the body and [its] achievements. This double happiness befell the holy martyrs, the courageous athletes of Christ, in every age, who nobly fight in this Circus of life, [who] prevail by falling, [who] defeated overthrow the enemy, [who] create a trophy from the remains of their own body, all the while a spectator does not restrain his hand. For one draws words out of wax tablets, another outlines with his pen the basics of the battles; one takes the vestment of the martyr, a faithful spoil; the other collects [the martyr's] blood, a pledge of faith. And thus, surviving himself, the martyr lives; after the sword, after the ashes, he gives testimony to his own battle.[148]

Rosweyde's witnesses shared in the glory of the martyrs—they enabled the martyr's testimony. Rosweyde shared in the martyrdom of the saints, imbuing his own polemical battles with *their* holiness.

Bolland's injunction to the reader to imitate the saints specifically extended to the hagiographer as well. Saints, as Bolland had noted, had also written hagiography.[149] The frontispiece of the *Acta Sanctorum* shows a radiant figure, *Hagiographia* herself, assisted by angels rescuing documents from the grasp of Time who was eating them [Figure 4.1]. Bolland directed a prayer to the saints for their aid: "Wherefore I pray and implore you, O saints, that you ask for grace for me from God, by which I may conform my character to his will and your examples." And he linked this prayer directly to the task at hand: "because the more saintly a life I lead, the more heaven will aid me writing well and suitably."[150]

Textual discernment again becomes a charism, a gift from God, bestowed on reader and hagiographer, but it is the latter who

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[148] *FS*, 3. "Qui apud posteros nomen amant, duo potissimum in votis habent, eruditum calamum, & penicillum, caelumve ductile. Illo hominis pars potior, animi virtus; hoc corporis rerumque gestarum decus propagatur. Gemina haec felicitas SS. Martyribus, animosis Christi Athletis, ab omni aevo obtigit; qui dum generose in hoc vitae Circo decertant, cadendo vincunt, superati hostem sternunt, trophaeum de corporis sui exuviis statuunt, non tenuit spectator manum. Hic namque verba ceratis tabulis excipit, ille stylo certaminum rudimenta adumbrat; hic Martyris vestem rapit, fidele spolium; ille sanguinem colligit, fidei obsidem. Ita sibi superstes vivit Martyr; & post gladium, post cineres, certamini suo testimonium dicit."

[149] *AS*, lvii.

[150] *AS*, lvii. "Quare vos oro obtestorque, Sancti, ut gratiam mihi a Deo impetretis, qua mores ipse meos ad illius voluntatem, vestra exempla, conformem; hoc maiorem ad bene apteque scribendum facultatem divinitus consecuturus, quo sanctius vixero."

shared in the sanctity of the saints. Bolland directed a prayer to "my Father," Ignatius of Loyola, to that effect. Ignatius, as Bolland again pointed out, had been converted by saints' lives and could intercede with God to favour "us sons."[151]

> If only occasionally some common servant from your most blessed group would rule my pen to cast and set these forth (I do not ask that this should be visible, nor do I think myself worthy [of that], but through some hidden inspiration and protection), how much more speedily, accurately, and suitably would I understand and explain everything! Please see (*curate*) to it that I will find what has been well written in the past, that I separate the spurious from the legitimate, set out all according to a well adjusted method and order; and that, if anything is more obscure, I explain and elucidate it properly.[152]

Bolland's humility had saintly connotations. The Jesuit professed doubt (much as Baronio had done) whether he should attach his name as author to the project; the various saints' lives had, after all, authors of their own.[153] But he hid behind the insistence of superiors and worried that those readers who wished to share saints' lives might not know where to send them.[154] Bolland also protested that all that he had written (quotations from Scripture and papal letters excepted) should be seen as fallible, human history. Bolland hoped he would be seen as any other author, but one who "prefers to die rather than knowingly deceive anyone."[155]

The part of martyr never fell to Bolland yet his disciples, who bore his name and imitated him, did admire his "almost miraculous" powers of manuscript collation.[156] With Bolland's death it became tradition to preface the next volume of the *Acta* with the life of the deceased Bollandist—hagiographer and saints bound together in

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[151] *AS*, lvii. "Patrem meum"; "nobis filiis."

[152] *AS*, lvii. "Utinam ad haec eruenda exponendaque calamum meum tantisper beatissimi illius coetus vestri mediastinus aliquis regeret, (non postulo ut aspectabilis, neque me dignum censeo; sed tacito quodam afflatu ac praesidio) quanto citius, accuratius, aptius cuncta assequerer explicaremque! Curate ut quae apte scripta sunt olim, reperiam; spuria a legitimis secernam; digeram concinno ordine ac methodo omnia; & siqua sunt obscuriora, accommodate ea explicem ac dilucidem."

[153] Cyriac K. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius: Counter-Reformation Historian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 36.

[154] *AS*, lviii.

[155] *AS*, xli. "mori malit quam vt sciens quemquam fallat."

[156] *AS*, vol. 6 (March, vol 1.), xxxv. "pene miraculose."

one tome. Bolland's *Vita* composed by his disciple, Godefroid Henschen, filled forty-six folio pages. In life, Bolland's correspondents prayed that God would grant him superhuman powers to accomplish his task. In death, other excerpted letters expressed the hope that he would join the saints amongst whose lives he had lived. In the words of one prominent Roman correspondent:

> He lived among the lives of the saints, why would he not die according to the precious death of the Saints, accepted in the most loving embrace, of them, of whose blessed lives he painted and commended an image[? . . .] I commend Your Reverences and this Holy (*Sanctum*) work, which will be of such great use to the Church, of such splendour to the Society [of Jesus], and of so great a glory to God.[157]

Canonization procedures had been institutionalised only in Bolland's time; new saints could only be discerned and proclaimed by Rome, but the holiness of the Bollandist task and the ambiguous conviction that Bolland was "with God and all the Saints" could be expressed.[158] Unlike the saints, no miracles were reported after death (one criterion for sainthood) but *near*-miraculous powers were observed in the *lives* of the Bollandists after death.[159] And the label Bollandist became itself a useful substitute; failed collaborators "who do not rank amongst those entitled to be called Bollandists" emerged.[160] The Society of Bollandists may regard itself as the world's oldest scientific society, but what motivated its members for many generations was not the pursuit of "scientific hagiography," but the pursuit of sanctity in their own lives. In order to understand attitudes towards saints' lives and the discernment of spirits then, we must recognize that the sanctity of ages past was a resource that lived on into the future, providing both models for imitation and a pedigree to bolster claims to holiness of later followers.

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[157] *AS*, vol. 6, lxvi. "Vixit ille inter Vitas Sanctorum, quidni obierit praetiosa morte Sanctorum, acceptus amantissimo amplexu ab illis, quorum beatae vitae imaginem pinxit ac commendauit, [. . .] commendo Reuerentias vestras opusque illud Sanctum, quod Ecclesiae tantae vtilitati, & Societati tanto splendori, & Deo tantae gloriae futurum est."

[158] *AS,* vol. 6, xliii. "Liceat eximij istius Patris, Domus vestrae Antverpiensis totiusque Societatis illustrissimi sideris, tantisper immorari memoriæ, quae vere in benedictione est apud homines, ecquis dubitet quin & apud Deum Sanctosque omnes?"

[159] See e.g., the comments made on Daniel Papebroch: Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists through Three Centuries*, 32–33.

[160] Delehaye, *The Work*, 37–38.

Were Delrio and Rosweyde both Bollandists *avant la lettre*? If we label them so, we must admit the polemical origins of the *Acta Sanctorum*; origins, or so it seems to me, that Bolland was well aware of but wished to obfuscate. Bolland's obfuscation highlights both the difficulty of embarking on a sacred task (the motivation for which needed to be located in the orders or actions of others) and the difficulty of claiming the gift of discernment. At the same time, such difficulties delayed none of these men. Anthropologists, I noted at the outset of this chapter, have seen myths as attempts to give voice to human truths that are simultaneously true and mutually opposed.[161] This exploration of the origins of the Society of Bollandists reveals something very similar: a quest for sanctity in past and present which was impossible in theory and yet was also a daily pursuit not only for aspiring saints but also for the hagiographers studied here.

It is still possible to preserve part of the traditional narrative albeit for different reasons. Rosweyde's persistence wore down the scepticism of his superiors, paving a path for Bolland to follow. Nevertheless, there were at least as many differences as similarities in approach. The interest expressed by Delrio and Rosweyde in medieval saints' lives was motivated by their struggle against heresy. Defeat, not conversion, was their aim. Consequently, they believed that they could not admit any concern about the veracity of the lives they collected. Yet, both also drew a parallel between the martyrs and their own imitated sanctity. Bolland was impelled by his own quest for sanctity to credit Rosweyde more than he should have, given their many differences. Paradoxically, that act of humility represented a debt larger than Bolland would care to admit.

[161] Doniger, "Claude Lévi-Strauss's Theoretical and Actual Approaches to Myth," 206.

CHAPTER FIVE

AUGUSTINE BAKER: DISCERNING THE "CALL" AND FASHIONING DEAD DISCIPLES

VICTORIA VAN HYNING

The perennial problem for commentators on—and practitioners of—the interior life of prayer is that it is essentially impossible to test and establish the efficacy and veracity of an individual's experience of God beyond doubt. How, then, can an institution condone meditative practices that rely on unobservable events, and who can claim with certainty that a religious experience is free from evil and the influence of the devil? These difficulties plagued Anthony in the desert and flared up time and again through the centuries. Advancing new or unusual methods of prayer was especially fraught in the aftermath of the Reformation when competing forms of Christian practice were being formalised into separate and violently opposed groups.

The treatises of the Benedictine priest Augustine Baker (1575–1641) manifest precisely these tensions. Between 1624 and 1641 Baker wrote over a million words about prayer methodologies for English nuns at a newly founded Benedictine abbey called Our Lady of Consolation, at Cambrai, in the Spanish Netherlands.[1] Despite

[1] Most of Baker's surviving works have been edited by Justin McCann, John Clark, and Ben Wekking and are printed or reproduced in the *Analecta Cartusiana* series, general editor James Hogg (Salzburg: University of Salzburg). The following treatises are concerned with what Baker termed "discernment" and finding one's "call" to a particular form of prayer, which he believed was different for everyone: *Doubts and Calls*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1999); *A Secure Stay in All Temptations*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1998); *Directions for Contemplation A.B.C.*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2001); *Book D*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2000); *Book E*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2002); *Book F*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1999); *Book G*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2000). All quotations reproduce the editorial practices of the editions from which they are taken.

formal investigations into the orthodoxy of his writings during and after his lifetime, these works were read extensively at Cambrai and were later copied for the library of Cambrai's daughter house, Our Lady of Good Hope in Paris, founded in 1652.[2] Baker urged a specific form of prayer which he called "internal affective prayer" and claimed it was "the end of all our spiritual and religious exercises [...] which will bring a soul to the state of perfection."[3] He did not hold the formal act of confession in great esteem, preferring the nuns in his charge to practise the prayer methods he propounded and to refrain from confessing any more than they had to. In minimizing the importance of confession—one of the few forums in which nuns could be monitored and guided by male clerics—Baker generated scrutiny and eventually anger from the official Cambrai confessors alongside whom he worked to serve the spiritual needs of the convent's nuns.

Baker's writings aimed to guide the Cambrai women to find their "call," metaphorically and literally the way in which God was calling them to himself. He writes: "Observe your own way, Spirit & Call, & of books take & practise according as you shall find to be proper & answerable to such way, Spirit & Call of yours, & no more nor further."[4] It is clear from this statement and others in Baker's writings that reading performed a key role in the nuns' discovery and practice of meditation. Baker closely monitored what they read and made reading lists stipulating whether they should read part or all of a work, depending on their progress in his prayer regime.[5]

Baker understood these texts and his own works as stepping stones towards spiritual self-sufficiency and an inwardness which

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[2] Founded in 1623 and 1652 respectively. Paris was founded by Cambrai nuns to house the overflow of applicants to Cambrai.

[3] Quotations from Augustine Baker, *Sancta Sophia: Or, Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation Methodically Digested by R. F. Serenus Cressy* (Douai, 1657) are taken from *Holy Wisdom or Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation*, ed. J.N. Sweeney (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1876), 349. See Mark Barrett, "'Such a world of books': Spiritual Reading in Augustine Baker," http://www.benedictines.org.uk/theology/2007/barrett.pdf.

[4] Augustine Baker, *Secretum*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1997), 5.

[5] See Heather Wolfe, "Reading Bells and Loose Papers: Reading and Writing Practices of the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and Paris," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 135–56.

was essentially impenetrable from the standpoint of the nuns' official confessors. This inwardness chimes with Protestant ideals of meditative practice and indeed, after Baker's death some of his works were lightly edited and circulated within Protestant circles. Given the nature of Baker's writings and the religio-political circumstances of the 1620s–1650s in particular, it is unsurprising that Cambrai's official confessors feared that Baker's teachings placed too much onus on the nuns' ability to discern accurately God's promptings from those of the devil. Although Baker discouraged the nuns from visionary experience, he urged them to confess as little as possible and employ silent, solitary meditative practices. According to Baker, his most able disciples did indeed overcome the need to confess too frequently. However, his success in teaching them this came at the cost of extensive institutional upheaval and his own removal from Cambrai.

1. *Confessors and Spiritual Directors*

The exile period for English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh Catholics (ca. 1560–1794) witnessed the flourishing of English-speaking Catholic institutions on the continent. These included schools that trained men for the priesthood and mission to the British Isles, as well as enclosed convents that recruited nuns from the wealthy gentry population. The two were linked since one of the occupations of the nuns was to pray for the reconversion of their homeland.[6] The well-educated ladies of the English-speaking convents were ministered to by a range of British brethren; local continental clergy, including bishops and archbishops; as well as Roman officials, such as papal nuncios. All of these had access to the convents on a regular basis. Archbishops and bishops interacted with the nuns annually during visitations and were also called upon to arbitrate in elections and other formal matters, as required. Nuncios or English General Chapter Presidents—in the case of the Benedictines—visited convents to ensure continuity between Rome or the Chapter and the diverse

[6] The Mary Ward Institutes have been the noteable exception to this paradigm, specializing in education particularly for girls. For a literary-historical analysis of Mary Ward and her movement see David Wallace, *Strong Women: Life, Text and Territory, 1347–1645* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), esp. ch. 3: "Holy Amazon: Mary Ward of Yorkshire, 1585–1645," 133–200.

communities throughout Europe. Confessors and spiritual advisors had most frequent cause to minister to the nuns, often living in buildings owned by the convent, and located nearby, thus allowing them to interact with the nuns as often as desired, usually weekly but sometimes even daily. Official house confessors said the majority of masses, heard confessions, administered the eucharist, and guided nuns in positions of authority. Such frequent contact, in addition to the explicit designation of the confessor as a mediator between the nuns and God via his administration of the eucharist and mass, made the confessor-confessee relationship one of the most powerful forces in a nun's life.[7]

The textual evidence for this relationship within the English convents in exile is prolific: it consists of advice manuals not only written by confessors for nuns but also by nuns for their confessors; and it includes lives of both confessors and nuns. Almost every house on the continent during the exile period saw priests and confessors committing sermons and advice to manuscript—and occasionally print—for an explicitly female, enclosed audience who would read these works long after the death of the author. This relationship was never unidirectional. Nuns served as the primary audience for their confessors, and their spiritual interests and needs were powerful shaping influences on what their confessors wrote and what the nuns chose to conserve for posterity. [8]

The formal orders of the Benedictines, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Sepulchrines, to name only a few, varied from each other with

[7] See Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2005). This study considers confessor-confessee relationships and "exemplary" lives from Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Spanish America, and French Canada and offers a useful corollary for the English life-writing activities studied here.

[8] See, for instance, the writings of Richard White alias Johnson (educated at Douai and confessor to the English Augustinian nuns at St Monica's, Leuven): *The Suppliant of the Holy Ghost: A Paraphrase of the Veni Sancte Spiritus*, ed. Thomas Bridgett (London: 1878); Tobie Matthew, *The Life of Lady Lucy Knatchbull (1584–1629)*, ed. David Knowles (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931); and three manuscript works by Paris Benedictine nun Barbara Constable: *Advises: For Confessors and Spirituall Directors*; *Speculum Superiorum*, and *Considerations for Preests*, Downside MS 82146/629 (1650), Colwich MS 43 (1650), and Downside MS 82145/552 (1653), Downside Abbey, Bath. For discussion of Constable's role as a writer for spiritual directors, see Jenna Lay, "An English Nun's Authority: Early Modern Spiritual Controversy and the Manuscripts of Barbara Constable," in *Gender, Catholicism, and Spirituality*, ed. Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen M. Mangion (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 99–114.

regard to their dress, diet, and prayer regimens. This variety invited additional writings from confessors and nuns who sought to interpret a particular community's brand of enclosed life with regards to her order. Just as confessorial advice writings varied from order to order, so they also varied from house to house, according to their traditions and practices. In some cases confessors and prioresses or abbesses adapted their instruction to fit the individual spiritual needs of a nun if hers differed significantly from those of other nuns in the community. Variation of interpretation of doctrine and daily life allowed nuns and their confessors to devise methods of prayer compatible with their monastic rule, yet remaining flexible enough to allow for more personalised pursuits of prayer and connectedness with God. Such flexibility could prove attractive to outside benefactors and potential recruits. Sometimes, however, the internal workings of a convent in the form of the conduct and written advice of a particular cleric or nun for an individual or group of nuns raised fears about orthodoxy and good practice, which in turn invited the examination or intervention of the order's General Chapter, a papal nuncio, or local archbishop. The mixed reception of Baker's treatises and the devotional writings of some of the Cambrai nuns in the 1630s and 1650s resulted in formal examinations and visitations from several successive English Benedictine General Chapter Presidents and others, enquiring into the precise nature of Baker's teachings, the nuns' prayer practices and their institutional hierarchy.

2. *Augustine Baker*

David Baker was born in Abergavenny in 1575 to Protestant parents. After several years at Oxford and the Inner Temple in London where he studied law, he experienced a religious conversion to Catholicism at the age of twenty-five and took the Benedictine habit in 1605. He studied at St Justina's in Padua, Italy and returned to England in 1607. Baker is credited with using his legal skills to help effect the reconciliation of the English Benedictine Congregation with Rome,

via its last surviving member, Sigbert Buckley.[9] After joining the Benedictines in England, Baker conducted research in Sir Robert Cotton's library towards the *Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Anglia*, a history of the Benedictine order that attempts to establish its primacy amongst English Catholic monastic traditions.[10]

In 1624, Baker moved to the continent where he served as an unofficial spiritual director in several English Benedictine communities, including the newly founded Cambrai Abbey. After severe institutional upheaval stemming from his teachings, Baker was removed from Cambrai to the English College of Douai, after which he was sent on the English Mission in 1638. He died of the plague in London in 1641 and bequeathed his voluminous output to Cambrai. His treatises were subsequently copied into many versions over the decades by generations of nuns, as well as official confessors at Cambrai and Paris, though not without concerns about his orthodoxy resurfacing.

Baker's encounter with pre-Reformation texts in Cotton's well-stocked library made a deep impression on his reading and writing habits.[11] He read various editions of the *Benedictine Rule* and diverse commentaries on it as well as medieval English texts, which informed his understanding of prayer practices and were later manifested in the treatises he wrote about meditation and prayer. These treatises were also informed by Baker's experience of what he described as mystical union, portrayed in thinly-veiled autobiographical sections of his treatise *Secretum*, which concerns the medieval English *Cloud of Unknowing* and other texts. Baker's experience was one of abstraction from his body: "y^{e} higher y^{e} soul is

[9] For details on the reconciliation with Rome, see Anselm Cramer, *Sigbert Buckley Monk of Westminster: The Benedictine Link*, Saint Laurence Papers 9 (Keighley: PBK Publishing, 2007).

[10] *Apostolatus* (Douai, 1626) is described in Peter Salvin and Serenus Cressy, *The Life of Father Augustine Baker, O.S.B. (1575–1641)*, ed. Justin McCann (1933), rev. ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1997), 18. For analysis of Baker's sources see Barnaby Hughes, "Augustine Baker and the History of the English Benedictine Congregation," in *Dom Augustine Baker, 1575–1641*, ed. Geoffrey Scott (Leominster: Gracewing, 2012), 19–29.

[11] Cotton's library was endowed with medieval works appropriated from monastic institutions that had been dissolved by Henry VIII during the Reformation. See Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), esp. ch. 2: "The Lost Libraries of English Humanism: More, Starkey, Elyot," 53–100.

Elevated from y^e^ Bodily Senses, & abstracted from them & from y^e^ body [...] y^e^ lesse subiect is She to be Caryed away w^th^ y^e^ inordinate passions & Affections of y^e^ body and of Sensuality, out of w^ch^ springeth y^e^ cheif *or only perill & Damage* of our Soules."[12] Baker strongly urged his nun-readers to use his treatises and the books he recommended as a means of transcending the body and the material world. He also encouraged them to rely on their personal experience and interpretative powers:

> For your better understanding of y^e^ said Book, I must remit you to your own Experiences, to y^e^ Light & help you have had, or shall have towards it, by the Reading of Other Books, to your frequent Reading of the Book itself [...] having in you the said aptnesse, & Proceeding dayly in the Exercise of Prayer, you will gather much Experience & light for y^e^ Understanding of these matters.[13]

Thus, while Baker may have discouraged the sort of sensory-rich meditation practices for which Teresa of Avila (1515–82) was examined by the Spanish Inquisition, he encouraged his readers towards an equally problematic methodology relying on complex theological texts and personal experience.

3. *Cambrai Abbey*

In 1623, Gertrude More (1606–33) and Catherine Gascoigne (1601–76),[14] along with six other Catholic women, travelled from England to the Low Countries where they "lived together in Secular maner in a faire howse" in the town of Douai, before finding a suitable space to set up a convent at Cambrai.[15] They were initially assisted by

[12] Baker, *Secretum*, 36. Emphasis added.

[13] Baker, *Secretum*, 20.

[14] The *Who Were the Nuns?* Project database [henceforth, "WWTN?"] gives details of English-speaking nuns who professed during the exile period. I cite each woman's given name, name in religion, and her individual database ID number. Helen More, in religion Gertrude, (CB137); Catherine Gascoigne, in religion Catherine, (CB074) served as abbess twice: 1629–41, 1645–73, http://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/search.html.

[15] Amongst the founding members were two of Gertrude's cousins, Anne More, in religion Anne, 1600–62 (CB134) and Grace More, in religion Agnes, 1591–1656 (CB136). Baker discusses the founders in *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More*, ed. Ben Wekking, Analecta Carthusiana (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2002), 13–16. Baker originally titled his work *The Life and Death of Dame Trutha, by Father Anonimous* but on the basis of some later manuscripts Wekking opted for *The Life and*

Benedictine nuns from the English convent at Brussels, whose members had been trained in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Jesuit prayer method developed by Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). This was not unusual for a new English establishment in France and the Low Countries because it was often Jesuit priests on the mission in England who recruited amongst the gentry for existing or new houses on the continent. The *Spiritual Exercises* involve frequent examinations of conscience, as well as confession and vocal prayer, in contrast to the traditional methods of Benedictine prayer that involved lengthy periods of silent meditation.

Within six months of their profession, Gertrude More and several of her compatriots expressed a longing for different prayer methods and alternative structures within which to live their religious lives. Given that Gertrude's dowry was the financial cornerstone of the house, and her happiness and willingness to stay at the convent were of superlative importance to its success, it was important to resolve the issue quickly. In response, their Benedictine house confessor Benedict Smith (ordained 1617; d. 1637) arranged with English Benedictine Chapter President, Rudesind Barlow (1584–1656) for Baker to come and serve as a supplementary advisor to the nuns.[16]

At first Baker offered alternative advice on prayer not in writing but in conversation with nuns who sought an audience with him. Those seeking his guidance included Abbess Gascoigne, who would become a life-long Baker supporter, and whose alliance was fundamental to his legacy at Cambrai and Paris. She oversaw the copying of Baker's manuscripts for the Paris foundation, and defended Baker's teachings against claims of unorthodoxy at several critical points before and after his death. By contrast, another nun, Gertrude More, initially shunned and even openly mocked him, as Baker later recounted with great zeal in his life of her, *The Life and*

Death of Dame Gertrude More. I retain *Trutha* to emphasize the conscious links Baker made between Gertrude of Helfta (also called "Trutha") and Gertrude More, which I discuss in more detail below. All subsequent references to Wekking's edition are cited as *Trutha*.

[16] Aidan Bellenger, *English and Welsh Priests, 1558–1800* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1984), 74; Margaret Truran offers further insight into Baker's response to the Cambrai crisis in "'The present author hath bin driven to this': What Needs Was Father Baker Trying to Meet?" in *That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker OSB, 1575–1641*, ed. Michael Woodward (Abergavenny: Three Peaks Press, 2001), 70–81.

Death of Dame Trutha, by Father Anonimous. According to Baker, Gertrude was experiencing spiritual aridity and isolation and only approached him for advice as a last resort.[17]

Baker steered Gertrude, Abbess Gascoigne, and those he deemed capable of internal prayer and mystical union away from the Jesuit method, towards writers and commentators such as the Benedictine Abbot Louis de Blois also known as Blosius (1506–66); Teresa of Avila; the English Capuchin, Benet of Canfield (1562–1610); and Constantine de Barbanson (1581–1632), Capuchin friar, guardian of the Carmelite Convent in Cologne, and author of *Secrets sentiers de l'amour divine* or *Secret Paths of Divine Love*, to name only a few. Baker brought his own books to Cambrai and made them available to the nuns in order to supplement what he considered to be a relatively spare library. He also wrote to Robert Cotton in the hope that he would lend more books to the community: "there were manie <good> English bookes in old time, wherof thoughe they have some, yet they want manie."[18] Baker's own collection included a manuscript of the medieval English *Cloud of Unknowing*, which he had inherited from Benet of Canfield, as well as Benet's autograph manuscript of *Of the Will of God*, which went through several translations and print editions and was popular in many religious communities on the continent.[19] Baker was attracted to authors who wrote guidance on the life of prayer specifically for a female readership. In his treatises he returns to the works of authors such as Benet, Constantine, and Blosius, again and again, "digesting" and commenting upon their treatises for the benefit of the nuns.[20]

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[17] Stage 1 of *Trutha* recounts Gertrude's initial rejection of Baker, 19–34.

[18] Augustine Baker to Sir Robert Cotton, 3 June 1629, MS Julius III, fol. 12r–v, Cotton, British Library, London; ibid., fol. 12r. The letter is reproduced in facsimile in *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and Other Documents relating to the English Benedictines*, ed. Justin McCann and Hugh Connolly, Catholic Record Society (London: J. Whitehead & Son, 1933), 280–81 (page unnumbered).

[19] William Fitch, in religion Benet of Canfield, was born to Anglican parents and following his conversion to Catholicism moved to the continent where he joined the Capuchins and received direction from Julian of Camerino who "grounded [him] in both the Franciscan and [. . .] Flemish mystical traditions." Stephen Innes, "Fitch, William [Benet of Canfield]," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4550.

[20] For a discussion of Baker's "mystick-author" canon, see Elisabeth Dutton and Victoria Van Hyning, "Augustine Baker and the Mystical Canon," in Scott, *Dom Augustine Baker*, 85–110. We argue that he may have been the first English writer to

As a personal acquaintance of Baker, Benet was particularly compelling. Benet translated his *Rule of Perfection* from Latin into English and dedicated it to several cousins professed in continental nunneries, including Abbess Anne Wiseman and her nuns at the Bridgettine Abbey at Lisbon, and Prioress Mary Wiseman and her nuns at St Monica, Leuven (editions of 1596 and 1609 respectively).[21] Benet wrote of this decision:

> By presenting this Rule of Perfection to such a house and companie, which is composed of my deer freinds, neerest kinsfolke, and native Countrie. [...] I hope yow will take it as a token, [...] *which [I have] squared out according to mine owne interiour practice* since my calling to Religion [...] having participated the same, and therwith informed others of my calling though not of my Countrie; I thought good now to communicate it unto others of my Countrie, though not of my calling; and for that purpose have translated it into English.[22]

Baker's translation and compilation activities for the nuns at Cambrai in the 1620s and 1630s mirror Benet's attentiveness to a female audience and his impulses for extending his prayer methods to nuns. Like Benet, Baker wrote spiritual books derivative of contemporary, medieval, and patristic theologians, but "squared out" by his own experience of prayer and the pursuit of mystical union, which he recommended to certain nuns.

Whereas it was commonplace for spiritual directors like Benet and Baker to knit together a variety of authorities to elucidate a point of doctrine or religious practice, designating a mystic's canon and perpetuating a complex prayer methodology amongst nuns opened Baker to accusations of unorthodox teaching. When attacked or even questioned over his teachings by his superiors, Baker styled himself as a morally unassailable spiritual director with valuable mystical *experience*, pitted against the noisy scholastics, by whom he meant the official confessors at Cambrai specifically and the Jesuits in general, with their limited *Spiritual Exercises*. Needless to say, Baker's abrasive response hardly endeared him to his opponents and left him vulnerable to further attack.

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designate a group of authors as "mystics" and recommend their prayer practices for the end of achieving mystical union.

[21] Anne Wiseman, in religion Anne, 1556–1650 (LB169) served as prioress at Syon House, Lisbon in 1607, and as abbess in 1614. Jane Wiseman, in religion Mary (1556–1650; LA303) served as prioress at St Monica, Leuven, 1609–33, "WWTN?"

[22] Canfield, *Rule*, 1596, unnumbered page. Emphasis added.

4. *Mounting Tensions*

Although Baker attracted many supporters and admirers in and beyond Cambrai, his works posed problems for nuns who were either incapable of or uninterested in the prayer methods he taught. His popularity and his influence caused tension between himself and the official confessors of Cambrai, most notably the Benedictine Francis Hull (ordained 1616; d. 1645), who was appointed confessor to the convent in 1629. In the same year Baker wrote a provocative apology for his works, *The Apologie*, in which he accused "scholastics" (by which he meant Hull) of an unhelpful attachment to theological terminology and overly-formalised prayer modes, as well as an inability to seek or recognize spiritual truth. Baker argued here, as elsewhere, that truth could be discovered from reading widely and cultivating personal experience of union with the divine.[23] He never expressed concerns that his eclectic methods could cause confusion or lead to sin through misjudgment.

In 1632, Baker was asked by Abbess Gascoigne to produce a translation and commentary on the *Benedictine Rule*, arguably the single most important document concerning the nuns' communal life. In true Baker fashion he made substantial interpolations. On the topic of "Obedience" (chapter seven of the *Benedictine Rule*) Baker produced almost 100 pages of extra commentary, a substantial amount of which discussed "back-biters" and "false brethren" who disturb the peace of a community.[24]

One year later, in 1633, a full-scale institutional argument over Baker's teachings erupted between him and Hull, who accused Baker of Quietism, Illuminism, undermining clerical authority by empowering women, and creating a faction of followers. Hull submitted a list of his objections about Baker's treatises and directorship to the English Benedictine General Chapter, demanding that Baker's writings be scrutinised and his powers as advisor curtailed. Hull's sixteenth objection reads: "That the Authoritie due to Priests, Confessarius, and Superiours is by Father Bakers Doctrine

[23] See Augustine Baker, *The Anchor of the Spirit; The Apologie; Summarie of Perfection*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 2008), esp. 59–60.

[24] Augustine Baker, *St Benedict's Rule: Volumes I–III*, ed. John Clark (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 2005–6), vol. 3 (2006) contains "A Larger Exposition of the 7th. Chapter," 389–478.

diminished, and more geven to women."[25] This alone would have been sufficient grounds to concern any clerical group responsible for maintaining order in the nunneries under their jurisdiction, and so Baker's works were formally examined by Chapter members, including Claude White (1583–1655), who in 1655 as President of the Chapter led a second attempt to remove Baker's treatises from Cambrai and Paris.

In response to Hull's formal list of "Obiections," sent to the Chapter in 1633, Baker wrote *A Vindication*. Whereas the *Apologie* was preemptive and saw Baker respond to imagined sanctions with vicious flare, in the *Vindication* he responded directly to Hull's written objections about his conduct. Baker approached the task with all the zeal of his legal training, marshalling witnesses and collecting signatures for his defence.[26] This methodology foreshadows his tendency in *Trutha* to foreground the approbative voices of his supporters, specifically Abbess Gascoigne and Gertrude. The importance of Gertrude in particular, as an advanced, adept pupil who had not fallen into the dangers outlined by Hull, is evident from the way Baker situates her defence of his methods in the *Vindication*: her response to Hull precedes his own rebuttal.

Gertrude challenges Hull's first objection: "That there must be a kinde of spirituall Confederacie, league, or freindship among those of his followers, together with communication of Bookes and Doctrins, different from the rest."[27] She asked, rhetorically, why she and her fellow nuns would form a faction which would put their souls in danger of God's wrath? She goes on to say that some of the nuns, including the abbess, "are very confident in one another" in spiritual matters, but that this is entirely in keeping with their monastic rule, which required nuns to report their spiritual state to the abbess or another high ranking nun at regular intervals. This

[25] Augustine Baker, "Objection the Sixteenth," in *Trutha*, 378 (appendix D). Two complete scribal copies of the *Vindication* survive, including MS Rawlinson C 460, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[26] The original document is held as MS A 216, Ampleforth Abbey, Yorkshire. I have consulted a copy held at MS Rawlinson C 460, Bodleian Library, Oxford. According to McCann this copy reproduces the signatures of Baker, Abbess Gascoigne, and Gertrude More which appear at the end of MS A 216. See Salvin and Cressy, "Appendix II," in *Life of Baker*, 199. These signatures suggests that the *Vindication* was conceived as a jointly-authored petition representing the views of both Baker and his followers.

[27] Baker, *Vindication*, in "Appendix D," *Trutha,* 366.

formalised process allowed an abbess to be on the look out for any signs of unrest, from the extremes of diabolical possession to a strong longing for home or friends—which would have been disruptive or painful to a nun—to whether or not she was keeping her habit starched and clean. Whereas confiding in superiors was established practice in Benedictine communities, Baker's 1632 version of *St Benedict's Rule* perhaps goes a step further than most. He writes at length about spiritual "elders" whom, he argues, need not be in positions of authority, but rather, spiritually advanced, as per his understanding of the Benedictine commentator Antonio Pérez (1559–1637), author of the *Commentaria in regulam S[ancti] Benedicti* (Commentary on the Rule of St Benedict; Lyon, 1625). On the intersection of female authority, discernment in matters of confession, and discussing matters of the spirit in less formalised ways, Baker writes:

> Howsoever it be, I say y^e^ *Rule* gives you leave & scope for it, yea & adviseth you to it as to y^r^ superiour. [...] I say you may choose & go to your spiritual father about it; yea, y^e^ *Rule* doth not restrain you, but rather by y^e^ foresaid interpretation of Perez expresely alloweth you to consult with any spiritual elder of y^e^ house, albeit she be not superiour. And the eldership is not to be understood in birth or habit, but in prudence & sufficiency to give counsell [...] sometimes [...] you should consult with some of your own sexe [...] rather than with any other. And [...] you may very lawfully do it, & that according to y^e^ *Rule*.[28]

Francis Hull's twofold charge that Abbess Gascoigne was part of a clique and abusing her power was a very serious one, but she and Gertrude could point to Baker's *Rule*, replete with numerous commentators, to support their actions. Hull's accusation and the nuns' reaction to it brought several key issues to the attention of the General Chapter: to what extent should Baker's interpretation of Pérez be promoted or allowed; to what extent should an informal spiritual advisor be writing for the community; and how much power should be granted to "spiritual elders" or nuns in positions of authority? The General Chapter could only answer these questions by reading Baker's corpus in full. The committee responsible for this task ultimately deemed Baker sound and formally approved his writings as orthodox. However, to mitigate the damage of the row, the Chapter

[28] Baker, *Rule*, 1:44.

simultaneously released both Baker and Hull from Cambrai. Despite this attempt to stem the flow of disagreement, conflict persisted at Cambrai and Paris for the next century as subsequent generations of confessors, clerics, and nuns battled to delineate the exact point at which clerical intervention stopped and a nun's "call" and personal relationship with God became her foremost guide. But what models—if any—were there for the successful transference of discernment to women?

5. *Baker's* Trutha

Shortly after Baker's removal from Cambrai to Douai, Gertrude More died of smallpox.[29] Despite the General Chapter's prohibition on correspondence with Baker, someone at Cambrai, most likely Abbess Gascoigne, sent him Gertrude's devotional writing. The papers consisted of poetry and prayers, largely on themes connected to Baker's doctrines. Baker then collated these "loose papers" into manuscript volumes for the nuns at Cambrai and wrote a brief introduction to them.

During or after the time he compiled her papers, Baker began work on a life narrative of Gertrude, the first of this genre to be written about a Cambrai member. He titled this *The Life and Death of Dame Trutha, by Father Anonimous.* Baker probably encountered the appellation "Trutha" in Blosius's *Institutio Spiritualis* where it is used in reference to Gertrude of Helfta (d. 1302). In his dedicatory letter of 1551 to his friend and patron Florentius à Monte, Abbot Blosius explained his focus on women visionaries as models for the life of

[29] See "Father Leander Prichard's Life," in *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker*, 119. Baker wrote to Abbess Gascoigne and her successor Abbess Christina Brent 1601–81 (CB015) about the spiritual life, Gertrude More and his treatises. A copy of an undated letter from Baker to an unnamed nun at Cambrai survives in Series 20 H (Bénédictines anglaises, Cambrai), Item 10, fol. 482, Archives départementales du Nord, Lille is a letter book containing epistles addressed to various Cambrai nuns. It is not possible to say with certainty, but the topic of this letter suggests its recipient was Margaret Gascoigne (1608-37; CB077), sister of Abbess Gascoigne. Margaret suffered bodily sickness for much of her life and according to Baker was prone to spiritual anxieties and an urge to confess too frequently. Baker's *Life of Margaret Gascoigne* is largely concerned with his previous teachings about how to seek inward assurances from God and decrease one's reliance on a confessor. Baker composed this comparatively brief *Life* in 1637 shortly after Margaret's death, which again necessitated clandestine exchanges with the nuns of Cambrai.

prayer in *Institutio*: "Even if we did not acknowledge from other sources the certainty and firmness of the Catholic faith than from the books of those blessed virgins, Gertrude [of Helfta], Mechtilde, Hildegarde [of Bingen], Elizabeth of Schönau, and of Bridget [of Sweden] the widow, what they have written ought to make the heretics exceedingly ashamed."[30] Throughout *Trutha*, Baker draws parallels between himself and Blosius as guides and supporters of women religious. He also links Gertrude More with Gertrude of Helfta, situating the former in the tradition of the latter by emphasizing each woman's access to "truth" via her special relationship with God, and underscoring the support both received from their spiritual directors.[31]

Trutha is divided into five parts: a Prelude and Stages 1 to 4. The Prelude traces Gertrude More's early life (1606–23), up to her departure from England to the Spanish Netherlands and highlights themes not uncommon to the life genre: that Gertrude was well-educated, obedient to her father, as well as intelligent for her sex and years. He also emphasizes her descent from Sir Thomas More (an iconic martyr for English Catholics).[32]

Stage 1 (1624–1625) recounts Gertrude's early difficulties with prayer at Cambrai, and Baker's arrival. Stage 2 (1626–31) elaborates on her suffering and Baker's role in helping her find her spiritual course. According to Baker, she suffered "great decaie in naturall and morall vertues" and became a divisive figure in the convent until Abbess Gascoigne prevailed on her to discuss her spiritual difficulties with Baker. He read to her from Constantine's *Secrets Sentiers* which struck a chord with her:

> In the beginning of this course of hers, that was much subject to those desolations, Anonimus one daie was reading to her and another some things out of a booke called [. . .] *Secre Sentiers*; the which he having in Latein, he readde to them in English; and therein he hapned to reade [. . .] concerning Desolations; which was as followeth; *videlicet*: "There

[30] Luis de Blois. *A Book of Spiritual Instruction: Institutio Spiritualis*, trans. Bertrand Wilberforce (London: Art and Book Co., 1900), xxxi–xxxv; xxi and xxxii.

[31] For more detail on how Baker incorporated the writings of Blosius in his treatises, see J.T. Rhodes, "Blosius and Baker," in Scott, *Dom Augustine Baker*, 133–52.

[32] For analysis of the impact of Thomas More's martyrdom on his progeny, see Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), esp. ch. 3: "'Worthy of their blood and their vocation': The More/Cresacre Line," 48–62.

> are some, who are leadde by great ariditie, indevotion, and without the sensible perceaving of the divin correspondence; in so much that they knowe not on which side to turne themselves for to finde meanes to help or elevate them towards God. Thes [...] can do no better [...] in such their povertie of spirit and ariditie to be contented [...] And then lette them confort themselves with the divin will, and accommodate all their exercises for to arrive to the true love of God." [...] Anonimus having readde [...] our Virgin was somewhat strucken with it, and suddenly said: "O, O, that must be my waie, I praie you (said she to him) lette me have that place translated into English." And so Anonimus did, and gave it to her, and she made great use of the doctrin, and continued her praier with great profit, notwithstanding all desolations, which were frequent to her.[33]

At the beginning of this extract Baker refers to Gertrude's "course," a word he uses to describe a person's religious undertakings and prayer methods. This he deems to be, in part, laid out by God and chosen or neglected by the nun using her free will; in this he echoes Augustine's conception of the predestination of the soul. This passage is significant not only because it marks a change in Gertrude but because it signals the nature of her and Baker's theological exchange as it unfolded over the next nine years: Baker set Gertrude on her course of prayer; she set him on his course of treatise-writing. To illustrate the impact of his teaching and Gertrude's internalization of it, Baker quotes her poetry and prose throughout *Trutha*:

> And that my wicked heart did prove
> who after sinnes so manie
> hath founde such favour in thy eyes
> without deserving anie.
>
> O blessed ever be my God
> for his preventing Grace,
> which I unworthie have receav'd
> in this most happie place.[34]

This poem suggests that Gertrude's "conversion" to an interior way and the discovery of her "call" to meditation while in the convent redeems the convent space, transforming it from a fear-provoking place of exile, into a fulfilling spiritual home. Baker writes of Gertrude's poetry and her "way," alluding to the conflict with Hull:

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[33] Baker, *Trutha*, 37–38.
[34] Baker, *Trutha*, 57.

> Would anie man blame her or wonder at it, that our Virgin [...] would stick fast to such her founde good waie, and not relinquish it uppon a hearesaie or uppon the conceipts of others [...] she had no reason to geve over or allter her said course uppon anie whatsoever suppositions, secret intents, threatnings, or affrightnings by other creatures [...] And uppon such tearmes and grounde [...] did and well might she satisfie and secure her conscience [...] both living and dieng.[35]

Throughout *Trutha* Baker attempts to establish his authority as the founder of Cambrai's prayer methods. He points to his disciples' literary activities as well as their decreased reliance on male intervention as positive outcomes of his teaching. The latter may seem counter-intuitive, but for Baker, the nuns' ability to function without him, however painful his removal from Cambrai, exemplified the efficacy of his teaching. Hull, on the other hand, apparently saw any minimization of male-intervention as an entrée for the devil and was not reassured by Baker's assertions that these women were finding God via his writings and their silent meditations.

6. *Teresa of Avila and Balthasar Álvarez*

Arguably, and perhaps obviously, the prayer method put forward in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* was a bad fit for an order of enclosed and contemplative Benedictine nuns with no active apostolate. Ignatius largely discouraged his followers from spending hours in silent prayer and committing to performing devotional hours—two mainstays of enclosed Benedictine practice—because these activities would inevitably have distracted Jesuit priests from their ministry. Accordingly, the differences between the Benedictine Rule, which had slowly been adapted for the use of women over the preceding millennium, and the relatively recent Jesuit style, established in the mid-sixteenth century by Ignatius for an exclusively male order which embraced an active apostolate, cannot be overstated. Nor should Baker's interest in those more heterodox members of the Society of Jesus, especially so-called *Alumbrados*, Quietists, and Illuminists, go without mention.

In reaction to the controversy of the *Alumbrados* or Illuminists in Spain in the sixteenth century, the then Superior General of the So-

[35] Baker, *Trutha*, 57.

ciety of Jesus, Everard Mercurian, confined the Jesuits to the *Spiritual Exercises* and prohibited the practice of "the prayer of silence" put forward by one of Baker's 'mystick-authors,' the Jesuit Balthasar Álvarez (1533–80).[36] Álvarez's inward-looking "prayer of silence" was attractive to Baker and resonated with his reading in the medieval English, continental, and patristic traditions.

At the midpoint of *Trutha* Baker stages an explicit comparison between his own persecution at Cambrai and that of Balthasar by senior Jesuits.[37] He translates sections of Father Luis de la Puente's (1554–1624) Latin edition of the *Vita del P. Balthasar Alvarez* (Madrid, 1615) and incorporated these into *Trutha*.[38] Balthasar had served as confessor to Teresa of Avila from 1559 to 1566, when Teresa was struggling to defend and communicate her own orthodoxy to the Inquisition, including parrying accusations that she was an *Alumbrada.* Baker draws comparisons between the works of Gertrude More and the written works and persecution of the now canonized saint, Teresa. Moreover, it is likely that Baker's familiarity with Balthasar's life and work flowed from the fact that Baker was an avid reader of Teresa's works, translating and writing about them throughout his tenancy at Cambrai.[39]

Early in her career inquisitors in Spain had been concerned about Teresa's visionary experiences of Christ, in which she conversed with him and received extra-confessorial guidance, including a mandate to reform her order and open new religious houses. *El libro de la vida* (*The Book of Her Life*) is the text she wrote under orders from the Inquisition setting out the story of her life and prayer

[36] On the *Alumbrados*, see Colin Thompson above, 69.

[37] In Salvin and Cressy, *Life of Baker*, McCann cites Baker's awareness of the Balthasar controversy, xxv. Likewise Kitty Scoular Datta acknowledges the controversy in passing in "Women, Authority and Mysticism: The Case of Dame Gertrude More (1606–33)," in *Literature and Gender: Essays for Jasodhara Bagchi*, ed. Supriya Chaudhuri (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002), 50–68. Otherwise Baker's use of the Balthasar controversy has not received scholarly attention.

[38] Two complete manuscripts of *The Relation of Fr. Balthasar Alvarez, Sent to his General, concerning his Prayer* survive. I have consulted one copy, which was taken from Cambrai during the French Revolution, now held as Series 20 H (Bénédictines anglaises, Cambrai), item 39, Archives départementales du Nord, Lille. This is a seventeenth-century copy that shows some signs of use.

[39] Baker cites Teresa's reforming efforts in his *Rule*, 1:44.

methods. The *Vida* was fundamental to her later beatification.[40] In the *Vida* Teresa recounts many instances in which male superiors attempted to bring her meditative practices back in line with Jesuit or Carmelite methods. For instance, a male superior standing in as her confessor during Balthasar's absence ordered her to "make the sign of the fig" at the visions when she saw them—believing them demonic—in order to unsettle the devil's machinations in her soul. Teresa recounts the pain and futility of this forced deprecation of Christ, citing his loving, beatific acceptance of her ill-treatment as further proof of the visions' veracity.[41] She simultaneously signals her obedience to (male) superiors, and the triumph of God and his methods over human misconceptions.

Like all of Teresa's confessors, Balthasar was initially sceptical of her visions and asked how she could be certain they were divine rather than demonic. She explained her visions and their meanings in detail, distinguishing between visions seen with the eyes and those of her experience, which she described as apprehended with the eyes of the soul.[42] Shortly after a confrontation over Teresa's visions, Balthasar had his own experience of what he called "infused contemplation" in which he felt God had revealed certain truths to his soul. When Teresa pushed him to demonstrate how he knew the experience to be sound, he resorted to her own proofs and arguments, which essentially amount to just knowing the truth when one sees it.

This was never a popular answer with the Inquisition nor with Jesuit superiors, as Balthasar would discover in 1571–73 when he was formally examined on his contemplative "prayer of silence" by Everard Mercurian. Balthasar's mediations were given short-term

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[40] See Gillian Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996); Carole Slade, *St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Alison Weber, "The Three Lives of the *Vida*: The Uses of Convent Autobiography," in *Women, Texts and Authority in the Early Modern Spanish World*, ed. Marta V. Vincente and Luis R. Corteguera (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 107–25.

[41] Teresa of Avila, *Saint Teresa of Avila: Collected Works; The Book of her Life, Spiritual Testimonies, Soliloquies* trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodrigues, revised ed., vol. 1 (Washington, DC: ICS Publishing, 1987), ch. 29, 246–53. See Colin Thompson, 58 above.

[42] This is a distinction carefully made by visionaries throughout the centuries, drawing on Augustine and Anthony of Egypt. See Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

approval for his own personal use, but he was banned from teaching them to others. A review of his case in 1577, however, resulted in his being barred from the practice of "the prayer of silence"; he was required to practise Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* exclusively and cease serving as a director or confessor to women, "especially Carmelite nuns." This stricture against acting as confessors to nuns was temporarily extended to all Jesuits, and by Teresa's death in 1582 the Jesuits had very little contact with the Discalced Carmelites.[43] Although his support of Teresa had caused Balthasar some difficulty, the two remained allies when both were accused of Illuminism.[44]

Gertrude More was no visionary, but Baker nevertheless found it useful to draw parallels between her and Teresa. Both women had founded a house and reshaped an order: Teresa reformed the Carmelites, whereas Gertrude helped re-found a specifically English branch of Benedictine monasticism that had been all but obliterated during the Reformation. By their own accounts both women overcame personal obtuseness and resistance to God and eventually enjoyed a deep, direct connection with the divine, helped in part by their spiritual advisors. In both cases their prayer routines contained substantial stretches of time in which they undertook unmonitored internal prayer, the results and content of which their male advisors could only guess at. Teresa found herself before the Inquisition and was asked to write the story of her life and an account both of her methods and her experiences of prayer. Similarly, Gertrude was invited by Baker to defend her methods and his teachings. She did this in the *Vindication* (the formal rebuttal to Hull's objections in 1633), as well as in her devotional poetry and prose, some of which was published after her death. Both women were instrumental in raising the profile of their confessor/spiritual advisors, for better or for worse.

Stage 3 of *Trutha* begins with two sections devoted to the Balthasar controversy, editorially titled "The Story of Father Balthasar" and "The benefit that may be reaped from the story of Father Balthasar," followed immediately by "Gertrude's Spiritual Course Questioned."[45] In "The Story" Baker offers a loose translation of La

[43] See Scott Lewis, "Balthasar Alvarez and The Prayer of Silence," *Spirituality Today* 41, no. 2 (1989): 112–32.

[44] See Baker, *Sancta Sophia*, 383–94.

[45] Baker, *Trutha*, chs. 23–25: 139–54.

Puente's text. According to this translation, Balthasar's orthodoxy lies in the fact that holy men are frequently persecuted for their methods, and that persecution is a sign of God's favour:

> For God permitted that certain persons of the Order, should conceave that [. . .] he was much in ignorance, illuded [*sic*] and deceaved, and by means thereof did deceave others allso. For they not knoweng of the height or sublime gift of praier, which our Lorde communicated or imparted unto him, did esteem, that in the nature and maner of his Praier he was by Sathan transfiguring himself into *an Angell of light* illuded [*sic*]; and therefore they urged him, that he should not prosecute or hold such a waie [. . .] fearing lleast perhaps he were becomme infected with some of the errors of certain pretended spirituall persons called the Illuminats, who were then in that countrey of Spaine.[46]

Baker dismisses the notion that Balthasar was either transformed into, embodied, or influenced by an "Angell of light" and points to his acquittal (though this was only partial) as well as the success of Teresa's doctrines, writings, and religious foundations as proof of Balthasar's soundness. Although Balthasar would never credit himself with teaching Teresa her way, Baker was eager to draw a parallel between himself and Balthasar as teachers, and writes: "This Father Balthasar lived in the time of St Tiresia, and much good doth she in her writings speake of him, and professeth herself to have receaved great light and benefit from him in matter of spirit, and for his great skill and experience in such things, she highlie extolleth him."[47] Though both Teresa and Balthasar might have agreed with this characterisation, Baker is too suggestive here (and elsewhere) that Teresa's powers of meditation derived from Balthasar's teachings, rather than the other way around, clearly reading their relationship in the same way he understood his and Gertrude's. By embedding Balthasar's story in *Trutha*, Baker told a cautionary tale of lesser religious men thwarting the teachings and practices of mystics and drew attention to the damage inflicted on the confessor/spiritual director's female followers by interfering outsiders.

Balthasar's partial exoneration and his close relationship with Teresa was a template for Baker's own partial exoneration and his attempts to establish a devotional cult around Gertrude. Although

[46] Baker, *Trutha*, 143, emphasis added.
[47] Baker, *Trutha*, 142.

Gertrude was never as popular as Teresa (and never canonized), her reputation amongst confessional and literary scholars as a "mystic" is long-lived. The number of extant manuscript copies of *Trutha* and Gertrude's own works, including printed editions of her devotional poems and prose (1657, 1658) demonstrate that Baker and later editors of her work were successful in promoting Gertrude as a model of Benedictine spirituality whose suffering could be recognized as consummate with that of one of the greatest women saints.

Stage 3 (1631–33) of *Trutha* covers the Hull-controversy and Stage 4 (1633) Gertrude's death from smallpox. A letter embedded in the text, sent from Abbess Gascoigne to Baker, describes Gertrude at her death as "trulie resigned to the divin will" and "humblie confident in the goodnes and mercie of God." But the letter also locates her death and peace of mind within the Hull-Baker struggle: "As she had ben faithfull to God in practising [...] the happie course which Father Anonimus first putt her into [...] she persevere[d] in the practise of it till death."[48] Her death is portrayed in pious terms typical of the life-genre, yet saturated with the language of the recent controversies. This is as much, if not more, an exoneration of Baker as it is a life of Gertrude.

Baker had not seen Gertrude in her final days, and his account of her death relies on letters sent to him illicitly by those of his supporters who tended Gertrude at her death. According to one letter from a nun to Baker, a false report came to Cambrai that he and Hull were come to offer their confessorial services to Gertrude as she neared death, although another confessor was already in place. Gertrude, at this point, had been fully confessed and received viaticum. She then spent the last day and a half of her life praying and reciting "devotional aspirations." When asked if she would see Baker (though in fact he was not there), Gertrude replied that she would not. When asked if she would speak with Hull, who may have been at the grate, and was quite possibly responsible for the rumour that Baker was back, she replied, "No, nor with any man."[49] Baker's inclusion of this report may surprise us: after all, he is rejected first. However, in Baker's eyes this in not a rejection, but a form of obedience that signifies Gertrude's achievement of perfection through prayer and adherence to his teaching even when Baker was in exile.

[48] Baker, *Trutha*, 315.
[49] Baker, *Trutha*, 323.

Another anonymous report included in *Trutha* attests to Gertrude's calm acceptance of death, a constant theme in lives from the period, Catholic and Protestant: "[I] saw plainly that she died confidently, and not in feare, as we were once tould in publicke, that our consciences would ake, when we were to die. But that (to our great comfort) is come to nothinge, as we saw by her."[50] This statement refers to an unpopular moment when Hull publically chastised several of the nuns for faults they revealed to him in confession, a complete breach of their trust and not in keeping with best practice. Baker represented Gertrude's diminished reliance on men, and her acceptance of death, as proof of her transcendence of the Cambrai conflicts and Hull's interference, and, more importantly, her success in achieving a state of union with God.

7. *Afterlives*

Baker's works stirred controversy again in 1655, by which time his treatises had been copied and circulated extensively by the nuns at Cambrai and Paris, both for their personal use and as devotional gifts for friends and family members, thus creating a life for the works beyond the convent walls. According to Baker's posthumous critics, such as Benedictine Chapter President Claude White, Baker's writings encouraged rogue individualism, discord within the convents, and worst of all, the treatises neglected to teach practitioners how to discern the operations of the devil from those of God. In 1655, White accused Abbess Gascoigne of gross misconduct when she refused to hand Baker's treatises over to him, to be examined and expunged of what White saw as the individualistic methodologies at the heart of Baker's teaching. Abbess Gascoigne wrote to Augustine Conyers, a priest friend and confidant: "the bookes are declared to containe poysonous, pernicious & diabolicall doctrine, My selfe in a damnable way running to perdition."[51] The Cambrai

[50] Baker, *Trutha*, 324.

[51] Victoria Van Hyning, "Convent Controversy and Intercepted Letters from Cambrai and Paris: 'We are now brought into most narrow straites,'" in *The English Convents in Exile 1600–1800*, ed. Nicky Hallett, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 3/1:285–94: here "Letter 1a," 289. For further letters pertaining to the controversy see Justin McCann, "Some Benedictine Letters in the Bodleian," *Downside Review* 31 (1930): 465–81, and; see also Claire Walker, "Spiritual Property: The English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and the Dispute over the Baker

and Paris nuns risked excommunication by refusing to hand over the books, but succeeded somehow in keeping their books and their convent together, perhaps due to White's sudden death in mid-1655.

Another factor that may have preserved Baker's oeuvre was that while this dispute raged, his autograph manuscripts were in the possession of the Benedictine Hugh Paulinus Serenus Cressy (1605–74), who was in the process of editing a "digest" of the works which he later published as *Sancta Sophia* (Douai, 1657). *Sancta Sophia* made Baker's teachings widely available, popularising them. Cressy also penned *The Life of Father Augustine Baker*, in which he writes of Baker's legacy:

> The greatest and most authentic approbation of those writings was the conversation of those disciples that practised them, their humble simplicity, their most resigned obedience and fervent devotion, which gave occasion to one of the fathers, a truly religious and judicious and of much experience in governing souls, to say that Fr. Baker had done more good among them than if he had wrought miracles.[52]

By this measure, Baker's books and teachings are more efficacious than miracles. And indeed, his corpus has been treated with a reverence consummate to devotion to saints.

After penning the *Life* and *Sancta Sophia*, Cressy edited Baker's manuscript collations of Gertrude More's papers. He produced two volumes: *The Holy Practises of a Devine Lover or the Sainctly Ideots Deuotions* (Paris, 1657); and *The Spiritual Exercises: Of the Most Vertuous and Religious D. Gertrude More of the Holy Order of S. Bennet and English Congregation of Our Ladies of Comfort in Cambray, She Called Them; Amor ordinem nescit; And Ideots Deuotions; Her Only Spiritual Father and Directour The Ven. Fa. Baker Stiled Them; Confessiones amantis; A Louers Confessions* (Paris, 1658). Like so much of Baker's treatment of his female disciples, Cressy's editions seem designed to evince the efficacy of Baker's teachings more than anything else. The 1658 title singles Baker out as Gertrude's spiritual father without acknowledging Hull or the two previous Cambrai confessors. Moreover, both titles establish Baker and Gertrude in a tradition of Benedictine spir-

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Manuscripts," in *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. Nancy Wright, Margaret Ferguson, and A. R. Buck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 237–55, and Geoffrey Scott, "Baker's Critics," in Scott, *Dom Augustine Baker*, 179–92.

[52] Salvin and Cressy, *Life of Baker*, 121.

ituality while overwriting Jesuit influence. The title of the second work is especially suggestive of this agenda: *The Spiritual Exercises* of Gertrude More are offered as a replacement for Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* but also recall Blosius's *Institutio Spiritualis*.[53]

Finally, and admittedly too briefly, it is worth considering one of Gertrude's poems, entitled "To our most Holy Father Saint Benedict," the substance of which is very suggestive of the Hull-controversy and Baker's influence in general. She writes:

> Most glorious Father in whose School,
> I liue and hope to dye,
> God grant I may obserue thy Rule,
> for in that al doth lye.
>
> [. . .]
>
> The more I looke vpon thy Rule,
> the more in it I find,
> O do to me the sense vnfold,
> For letter makes vs blind!
>
> And blessed, yea a thousand times,
> Be thou who it hast writ,
> And thy sweet blessing giue to them,
> who truly performe it.
>
> For those are they which wil conserue
> this house in perfect peace,
> Without which al we do is lost,
> and al thats good wil cease.[54]

Although this poem is not dated, it seems likely that it was written sometime between 1629 and 1633 while discord was emerging at Cambrai. If written in 1632, the year Baker presented his *Rule* to the community, Gertrude may have been playfully encompassing or even conflating St Benedict and Baker.

As well as alluding to the necessity of keeping peace, this poem recalls 2 Corinthians 3:6, in the Douai-Rheims translation, "For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth." Gertrude's use of this well-known line is suggestive of Baker's surprising assertions (given his

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[53] Blosius. *Institutio spiritualis: non parum vtilis iis, qui ad vitae perfectionem contendunt: itemq[ue] exercitium piarum precationum* (Leuven, 1553).

[54] More, *Spiritual exercises*, 281–83; 281, 282. Italics as they appear in the text.

loquacity) in the *Rule* and his other treatises, that the nuns will be led by God to make the right decisions about their spiritual lives, and that his writings—indeed all writing and direction—are guides which should eventually be left behind. It seems that Gertrude interprets the *Benedictine Rule* as a tool to discover the "sense" or meaning of things in order to move beyond them.

8. *Conclusion*

It is intriguing to wonder if Baker's doctrines would have taken hold so deeply had it not been for the Hull- and White-conflicts and the timing of Gertrude More's death. By dying so soon after Hull and Baker's removal from Cambrai she easily became a martyr-figure; first in Baker's, then in Cressy's narratives, as well as amongst those who practised and defended Baker's doctrines in the centuries that followed. Whereas other English and European convents boast of visionaries and saints as beacons of their religious order's identity, many English Benedictines promote Baker's books and his teachings to this day. Increasingly the writings of Gertrude More are receiving sustained theological, devotional, and critical attention: there is still plenty to be done to understand her influence on the literary and devotional life at Cambrai and Paris.

Like many theological controversialists, Baker and Gertrude More intrigue scholars and practitioners because they attempted to express an inexpressible experience of God, and guide others towards similar revelations. Their writings and the controversies surrounding them highlight some of the complex tensions between an individual's pursuit of unity with the divine; individuals living within religious communities under a shared Rule; and institutions trying to moderate or control individuals and communities and prevent the incursion of demonic influences. Baker and his disciples probably most disconcerted their overseers in not sharing their fear of demonic intervention, or rather, by being so deeply convinced of the veracity of their own, ever-ineffable, *experiences*.

CHAPTER SIX

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PROPHET CONFRONTS HIS FAILURES: PAUL FELGENHAUER'S *SPECULUM POENITENTIAE*, *BUß-SPIEGEL* (1625)

LEIGH T. I. PENMAN*

In 1640, the Bohemian chiliast and visionary Paul Felgenhauer (1593-1661) issued an ambitious work titled *Das Büchlein Iehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit* (The Little Book *Jehi Or*, or the Dawn of Wisdom), which delineated the contours of his radical theosophical worldview.[1] According to Felgenhauer, knowledge of the world could be divided into triumvirates derived from the three "books" of wisdom: the first book being that of nature, creation, and of the heavens; the second being Holy Scripture; and the third being that of man himself. Yet at the heart of this confident guide to a new world was doubt. This doubt was expressed almost inadvertently in a statement concerning the signs by which readers could recognize that Felgenhauer wrote not presumptuously, and on his own behalf, but on the authority of God through the power of the Holy Spirit:

> Although our knowing and *prophesying* be but part; yet we will not quench the spirit and we are not to despise *prophesying*: And the Reader in the Lord may know that we have our wisdom, be it about natural things, or spiritual, learned out of the Holy Scripture, and not out of prophane writings; for the Bible is sufficient to us to all wisdom, and we used in 24 years [i.e., since ca. 1625] no other book to find out wisdom but the Bible. Out of this book the spirit of wisdom,

* The author would like to thank Jürgen Beyer, Stuart Clark, Albrecht Classen, Clare Copeland, Jan Machielsen, Vladimír Urbánek, and Andrew Weeks for offering comments, corrections, and advice. All translations are the author's own unless otherwise indicated. Biblical citations are from the Authorised King James Version.

[1] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Das Büchlein Iehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit* ([Amsterdam], 1640).

> through the anointing, can teach us all things and needs no other spirit or man to teach us.[2]

Why was 1625 so important to Felgenhauer? This date did not signal the inauguration of his prophetic career. Instead, it marked a crucial year in which Felgenhauer was forced to accept the catastrophic failure of the earliest phase of his life as a self-proclaimed prophet. For, between 1621 and 1623, under a variety of pseudonyms, Felgenhauer had issued numerous works, based on a variety of sources which confidently predicted that an earthly millennium would commence in 1623.

When this date came and went, Felgenhauer initially reoriented his hopes, predicting the "year of jubilation" for 1625 and 1626. However, he was evidently riddled with doubt following his initial failures and, saddled with a heavy conscience, in the course of 1625 abandoned his chiliastic prophecies altogether. Instead, in a manuscript work entitled *Speculum Poenitentiae* (Looking-Glass of Penitence, 1625), Felgenhauer attempted to reconcile his self-image as a divinely-ordained prophet with the failure of his prophecies. The *Speculum Poenitentiae* is, I believe, a unique example of early seventeenth-century prophetic literature. It comprises an unusual type of spiritual autobiography, as well as a statement of no little interest to sociologists, psychologists, and historians interested in the psychological effects of disconfirmed prophecy on believers. Equally, however, it offers a unique perspective on the vexing theological question of the discernment of spirits from the perspective of early modern heterodox Protestantism.

This chapter examines the content and significance of the *Speculum.* It is structured in four parts. In the first, I introduce

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[2] [Felgenhauer], *Iehi Or*, 66. "Ob wir zwar vnser wissen vnnd weissagen selbst für stückwerk achten in Erkentnus/ so wollen wir doch den Geist nicht dempfen/ vnd sollen die weissagung nicht verachten/ vnd wolle der Leser im HERRN wissen/ daß wir vnsere weisheit/ es sey in den Natürlichen oder Geistlich/ aus der heiligen Schrifft erlernet vnd erkant haben/ vnnd nicht aus Menschlichen büchern vnnd weisheit/ denn die H. Bibel genüget vns zu aller weisheit/ vnd haben wir vnß in 24. jahren/ keines andern buchs gebrauchet/ die weisheit zuerforschen/ denn allein desselben: vnnd neben diesen/ in vnd aus diesem/ auch durch dieses Buch/ kan vnß der Geist der weisheit/ durch die Salbung alleß lehren/ vnnd dürffens gar nicht/ daß vnß ein anderer/ es sey Geist oder Mensch/ lehre." The English translation is from: [Paul Felgenhauer], "Jehior or The Day Dawning: or Morning Light of Wisdom," in *The Philosophical Epitaph of W. C. Esquire for a Memento Mori on his Tombstone*, ed. and trans. William Cooper (London, 1673), 42.

Felgenhauer by means of a biographical sketch, highlighting the several contexts in which his initial prophetic mission to 1625 and the *Speculum* were developed. In the second, I analyse the *Speculum* itself, highlighting its key features and its approach, in particular, to the matter of the discernment of spirits. In the third, I combine analysis of Felgenhauer's career with the content of the *Speculum* and consider this material with regard to theories of cognitive dissonance, the dominant social-psychological interpretative model applied to the experience of failed prophecy. The fourth part provides a reflective conclusion. A close study of the context and content of Felgenhauer's *Speculum Poenitentiae* not only contributes to our knowledge of contemporary dissident Protestant religiosity but also to ongoing debates about theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of disconfirmed prophecy in all periods, as well as the variety of methods available for individuals to deal with catastrophic challenges to their worldview.

1. *Felgenhauer's Life to 1625*

Paul Felgenhauer was born in the Bohemian market town of Puschwitz (Buškovice, Czech Republic) on 16 November 1593.[3] According to his autobiographical account, presented some half century later to Lutheran authorities during an inquisitorial trial, Felgenhauer was always destined for a special future. Before his birth, his father, an evangelical pastor in Puschwitz, had a premoni-

[3] The following account is based largely on the records of a 1657 trial against Felgenhauer in Syke, in the Grafschaft Hoya: "Peinliche Verurteilung des Paul Felgenhauer wegen Ketzerei und seine Gefangenschaft zu Syke," Cal. Br. 23 no. 654, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Hanover [henceforth, "Peinliche Verurteilung"]. Felgenhauer's testimony here was utilised in the biographical accounts by Ernst-Georg Wolters, "Paul Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," in *Jahrbuch für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 54 (1956): 63–84 [henceforth, vol. 1] and 55 (1957): 54–93 [henceforth, vol. 2]; and Johannes Göhler, *Wege des Glaubens: Beiträge zu einer Kirchengeschichte des Landes zwischen Elbe und Weser* (Stade: Landschaftsverband der ehemaligen Herzogtümer Bremen und Verden, 2006), 217–35. Further important studies include: Josef Volf, "Pavel Felgenhauer a jeho náboženské názory," *Časopis musea královstvi českého* 86 (1912): 93–116; Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock: Religions- und geistesgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Möhr (Paul Siebeck), 1952), 18–45; and, Vladimír Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika: Příspěvek k dějinám myšlení pobělohorského exilu* (Prague: České Budejóvice, 2008), 104–44.

tion that his son was destined to be touched by the divine. As if in confirmation of his foreordained calling, Felgenhauer claimed that he emerged into the world shrouded in a birth caul; a circumstance recognized as a propitious sign of divine sponsorship by many societies since antiquity.[4]

After losing his father early in life, Felgenhauer was educated at Latin schools in nearby Annaberg, as well as further afield in Braunschweig and Seehausen. In 1608 he matriculated at the faculty of arts of the University of Wittenberg and in 1613 he began to study Lutheran theology.[5] Felgenhauer's studies, by all accounts, proceeded well. In 1616 in Wittenberg's *Schloßkirche,* Felgenhauer delivered his first sermon on John 16:5, "Now I am going to him who sent me." Based on the power and pious nature of this initial sermon, Wolfgang Frantzius (1564–1628), a member of Wittenberg's theological faculty and church provost, promptly appointed Felgenhauer deacon.[6] The stars appeared to be aligned for Felgenhauer to enjoy a promising career as a churchman.

But all was not well in Wittenberg. From late 1616 Felgenhauer was regularly gripped by bouts of depression which ultimately prompted a crisis of faith. He attempted to soothe his soul by reading the devotional writings of the Lutheran pastor Johann Arndt (1555–1621) and indeed later sought out and befriended Arndt himself.[7] But to no avail. He was haunted by existential angst and at times wept uncontrollably. After wrestling with his demons for several months, on Saturday 17 January 1617 Felgenhauer was visited by the Archangel Gabriel in a dream. Later, Felgenhauer would claim that Gabriel bestowed upon him "godly wisdom," which allowed him, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to see the hidden

[4] "Peinliche Verurteilung," fols. 57r–v. On the significance of the birth caul, see Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 28–29.

[5] Felgenhauer matriculated in the philosophical faculty as "Paulus Felgenhawer Puschwitz. Boh." in 1608, and then again on 11 March 1613 in theology as "Paulus Felgenhauer Henichiensis." The altered geographical indicator points to his father's birthplace in Hänichen, Saxony. See Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 107, n. 353; "Peinliche Verurteiling," fol. 57r; *Album academiae Vitebergensis*, ed. C.E. Förstermann (Halle: Maximilian Niemeyer, 1905), Jüngere Reihe Tomus 1 (1602–60), 74, 136.

[6] "Peinliche Verurteiling," fols. 58r–59r; Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:64.

[7] Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:63–64.

truths of the Bible and interpret its meanings infallibly. The doubts which plagued him suddenly disappeared.

At least, this is what the prophet claimed in an account written some twenty years later. His initial printed works, however, demonstrate that he knew not what to make of this first encounter with the numinous. His *Speculum Temporis* (Looking-Glass of Time; 1619, 1620) was an apocalyptic Scriptural chronology in the Lutheran tradition, which exhorted readers to penance and to wait for the coming Judgment Day.[8] In a second chronological work, the *Rechte Warhafftige und gantz richtige Chronologia* (Correct, Truthful, and Entirely Accurate Chronology, 1620), Felgenhauer became even firmer in his interpretation of Scripture. Based on a series of calculations he determined that the Last Judgment would occur, at the very latest, in 1765.[9] Although some radical aspects are present in these writings—indicated, for example by Felgenhauer's praise for the Rosicrucians—there was no indication of the catastrophic break from Lutheranism which was to come.[10]

But an ill star hung over Europe at this time. Since March 1618 the Bohemian kingdom had been in revolt against the Habsburgs, beginning a struggle which would ultimately escalate into the Thirty Years' War. In November and December of the same year a fiery comet burned portentously across the night sky in northern Europe, triggering a profusion of prophetic excitement. Felgenhauer's fortunes were directly impacted by the Bohemian war. On account of growing civil unrest he was forced to refuse the offer of pastorships

[8] Paul Felgenhauer, *Speculum Temporis Zeit Spiegel Darinnen neben Vermahnung aller Welt wird vor Augen gestellet, was für eine Zeit jetzt sey unter allerley Ständen* ([Prague], 1620). No copies of the 1619 edition are extant. The best bibliographies of Felgenhauer's work are in Čeněk Zíbrt, *Bibliografie české historie*, vol. 5 (Prague 1912), 801–16; Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:71–84; Gerhard Dünnhaupt, *Personalbibliographien zu den Drucken des Barock*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1990–93), 1457–77. Further tracts by Felgenhauer are listed in Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica: Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 enststandenen Handschriften und Drucke*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1995), 175; and Jana Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký v zrcadle letákové publicistiky: Letácky jako pramen k vývoji a vnímání české otázky v letech 1619–1632* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, Filozofícka fakulta, 2010), 356–58, 379–84. Several of Felgenhauer's works cited in the present article are not mentioned in any of the above literature.

[9] Paul Felgenhauer, *Rechte/ Warhafftige und gantz Richtige Chronologia, Oder Rechnung der Jare der Welt/ Von der Welt und Adams Anfang an/ biß zu diesem jetzigen Jahr Christi/ M.DC.XX.* ([Prague?], 1620).

[10] See Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 118–19.

in Lubin (Lubina) and Libotschau (Libočany).[11] While this was disappointing, Felgenhauer's general dissatisfaction with the situation in his homeland took another turn entirely later in 1620, when Lutheran Saxony announced her intention to enter the Bohemian conflict not on the side of the Bohemian Calvinists but in alliance with the Catholic Habsburgs. The Saxon position was justified by, among others, the Dresden court preachers Polycarp Leyser (1552–1610) and Matthias Hoë von Hoënegg (1580–1645), both of whom argued in a series of pamphlets that, as a question of conscience, it was impossible for a Lutheran to side with a Calvinist above a papist.[12]

For Felgenhauer, Saxony's position was unconscionable. He believed that the Saxons owed their support to fellow Protestant Frederick V (1596–1632), newly elected king of Bohemia, rather than the Habsburg wolves. That Saxony's evangelical elite justified this political posturing—through which Saxony received new lands and guarantees of territorial integrity—with garbled theological arguments provided incontrovertible proof that the earthly Lutheran Church had devolved into a *Mauerkirche,* a church of mere walls which lacked divine authority.

Incensed, in November 1620 Felgenhauer suddenly discovered the true meaning of his earlier divine contact and transformed himself into a prophet of the Bohemian rebellion. This discovery coincided with the defeat of Frederick V at White Mountain on 8 November 1620, where the Bohemian army was routed within hours by Habsburg troops. Exiled thereafter from his homeland, Felgenhauer began to issue several pamphlets predicting Frederick's restoration. Felgenhauer's first work of this type, the *Decisio prophetica belli Bohemici* (The Prophetic Decision of the Bohemian War, 1620) appeared under the pseudonym "Christianus Crucigerus."[13] A call

[11] "Peinliche Verurteiling," fols. 59v–60r; Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:64–65.

[12] Polycarp Leyser, *Eine Wichtige und in diesen gefährlichen Zeiten sehr nützliche Frag: Ob, wie, und warumb man lieber mit den Papisten gemeinschafft haben, und gleichsam mehr vertrawen zu ihnen trage solle, denn mit, und zu den Calvinisten* (Leipzig, 1620). Originally authored before his death in 1610, this tract was reprinted during the Bohemian war. See Ludwig Schwabe, "Kursächsische Kirchenpolitik im Dreißigjährigen Kriege (1619–1622)," *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 11 (1890): 282–318; Frank Müller, *Kursachsen und der böhmische Aufstand 1618–1622* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1997).

[13] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Decisio Prophetica Belli Bohemici: Eine sehr nothwendig und nützliche Frage zu diesen letzten zeiten; Darinnen decidiret wird/ Mit wem man es (das*

for the restoration of a "pure" evangelical faith in Bohemia according to the teachings of Jan Hus (ca. 1359–1415), the *Decisio prophetica* marked Felgenhauer's decisive break from Lutheranism. He alone, inspired by the Holy Spirit, carried Luther's legacy against the *Mauerkirche*: "Oh Luther, you blessed and true man," he lamented, "if you could but see, hear, and read the words of your disciples and how they lust after the Roman whore."[14]

Exiled, like many of his fellow Protestants from Bohemia, Felgenhauer wandered throughout the Holy Roman Empire. He established contact with a heterodox cohort that expressed equal disillusionment with prevailing spiritual and political circumstances. He issued further pamphlets, like the *Flos propheticus* (The Prophetic Bloom, 1622), a three-part prophecy of Bohemian restitution.[15] Inspired by the works of fellow Lutheran dissidents such as Torgau chiliast Paul Nagel (ca. 1575–1624) and the Würzburg visionary Philip Ziegler (fl. 1585-ca. 1626)—whom he had first met in Wittenberg—he discarded his earlier apocalyptic chronologies. Instead, Felgenhauer predicted that the New Jerusalem would descend onto the hills of Prague, and Frederick V and the true Hussite Church would be restored in Bohemia sometime in 1623.[16]

As the terminal date approached, Felgenhauer's pamphlets became erratic in tone and content, offering readers a series of incoherent prophecies drawn from visions that had tormented him in his sleep. Under pseudonyms such as "P.F., true servant of God"

Böhmische Wesen betreffend) halten oder nicht halten solle ([Halle?], 1620). On this work, see Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 120–24.

[14] [Felgenhauer], *Decisio Prophetica*, sig. G1r. "O Luthere, du seeliger vnd werther Mann/ wenn du soltest deine Discipulos sehen/schreiben vnd rathen hören/ wie sie nach der Römischen Huren geülen/ du dörfftest ihnen nicht unbillich einen guten derben vnd scharffen product abstreichen."

[15] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Flos propheticus In quo adaperitur testimonium de veritate Jesu Christi, In Leo Silentii & Rugiente.* (n.p., 1622). On these tracts, see Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 124–27.

[16] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Complement Bon' avisorum: Speciale Neue Avisen, Welche der POSTILION des grossen Löwens vom geschlecht Juda hat gesehen* (n.p., 1622). A Dutch translation was printed in the same year as *Complement bon' avisorum: Speciale nieuwe avysen; D'welcke Postilion van den grooten leeuwe van den gheslachte Juda gesien heeft in zijne prophetische bloeme* ([Amsterdam?], 1622). On Felgenhauer's prophecies for 1623 in general, see the excellent summary in Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 124–32; and, Alexander Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse: The Reception of the Second Book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 182–83.

(*P.F. getreuer Diener Gottes*) and "the little lion" (*der kleine Löwe*), he railed in increasingly vehement and occasionally hysterical language against all *Mauerkirchen*. His passion for his Bohemian homeland is palpable in all of these tracts, as is the sense of injustice in the loss of his patria to the avaricious hordes of Satan, personified by the Habsburgs and the Saxons. In 1622 and 1623 Felgenhauer became entangled in a bitter polemical debate with the evangelical court preacher in Lübz, Georg Rost (1582–1629). The debate was occasioned when Rost issued his *Heldenbuch vom Rosengarten* (Heroic Book of the Rose Garden, 1622), an attack on Felgenhauer and contemporaries such as Nagel, Nicholas Harprecht, and Joachim Cussovius, charging them with all manner of heresies, most prominently that of chiliasm.[17] Felgenhauer's replies to Rost are redolent with arrogance and contempt both for his opponent, as well as for established churches more generally.[18] For Felgenhauer, true Christian belief did not consist in adhering to rigid confessions of faith (*Bekenntnisschriften*) or dogmatics but in enlightened understanding of Scripture. All the world, Felgenhauer believed, would not have long to wait to see his beliefs justified.

But in the crucial year 1623 Felgenhauer's prophecy failed to come to fruition. Frederick V did not return to the Bohemian throne, the Catholic yoke in Bohemia was not overturned, and the New Jerusalem did not descend on Prague. The failure of Felgenhauer's predictions weighed heavily on his conscience. The course of time itself had vindicated his opponents, like Rost. How could Felgenhauer justify his public claim that he was an enlightened interpreter of Scripture, blessed by God and the Holy Spirit, when things had turned out entirely contrary to his prophecies? How could he call himself a theosopher—a lover of divine wisdom—when his homeland was crushed under the heel of Babylon?

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[17] Georg Rost, *Heldenbuch vom Rosengarten, oder gründlicher und apologetischer Bericht von den newen himlischen Propheten, Rosenkreutzern, Chiliasten und Enthusiasten, welche ein new irrdisch Paradiß und Rosengarten auff dieser Welt ertrewmen,* [. . .] *benamentlich M. Valentinus Weigelius* [. . .] *M. Paulus Nagelius* [. . .] *Paulus Felgenhawer* (Rostock, 1622).

[18] See Paul Felgenhauer, *Apologeticus contra invectivas aeruginosas Rostii: Darinnen Georgius Rostius Mechelburgischer Hoffprediger zu Lüptz neben andern auch wieder meinen Zeit Spiegel vermeint Aein gewaltiger Held zu werden: Welcher aber zum Luegener.* (n.p., 1622); Paul Felgenhauer, *Disexamen vel examen examinis seu responsion modesta ad Examen veramen vexamen Rostianum contra Apologiam suam* ([Amsterdam], 1623).

It would have been easy enough for Felgenhauer to hide from the harsh light of failure. After all, his prophetic works in support of the Bohemian cause had appeared under a pseudonym. And for a short time he did hide. Begging off his earlier predictions, Felgenhauer recast his expectations for later dates. In early 1624 he issued his *Alerm-Posaun* (Alarm Trumpet) in which he confidently, albeit pseudonymously, proclaimed the imminent arrival of the Lion of Judah (Frederick V recast) who would institute a "golden freedom" in Bohemia.[19] He realigned his expectations in this same tract for 1625 and 1626, a "year of jubilation" ("Jubeljahr") which would witness—in a significant expansion of his earlier expectations—the conversion of the Jews, and a spiritual victory of Protestantism, not only in Bohemia but across the world.

There are signs, however, that even at this early point Felgenhauer had been somewhat weary of reorienting his prophetic expectations. In 1624 he issued the *Christianus Simplex* (The Simple Christian), a devotional tract uncharacteristically bereft of prophecies, which presented a series of meditations on the nature of true spirituality.[20] This is an indication that Felgenhauer was becoming interested in elaborating a sustainable version of theosophical Christianity, one not predicated on prophecy. Similarly, at the end of October 1624 Felgenhauer wrote his *Prodromus evangelij aeternae seu Chilias Sancta* (Herald of the Eternal Evangel or the Holy Chilias), a description of the events which would occur immediately prior to the imminent millennium. While one would expect such a work to be dripping with pro-Bohemian rhetoric, this was not the case, and day and date predictions were entirely absent from its pages.[21]

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[19] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Alerm Posaun: Welche der Postilion des großen Löwens vom Geschlecht Juda und einem Gesicht im Traum hat hören blasen* [. . .] *Notizifiert am 18. November 1623* (n.p., 1624). A Dutch translation was also issued as *Alarmbasvyn: De welcke de Postilion des grooten leeuws uyt den gheslachte Juda, in een ghesichte in den droom heeft hooren blasen* (n.p., 1624).

[20] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Christianus Simplex, Das ist, christlicher Bekenner und Bekenntnis der Glaubigen und Auserwählten von Gott und seinem Sohne Jesu Christo* (Amsterdam, 1624).

[21] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Prodromus Evangelii Aeterni seu Chilias Sancta: In welchem/auß Heyliger Göttlicher Schrifft* [. . .] *erwiesen werden/ Die Heyligen Tausendt Jahr/ Deß Sabbaths unnd Ruhe deß Volckes Gottes/ im Reich Christi/ neben einer Allgemeinen Bekehrung/ aller Jüden/ und der Zehen verlohrnen Stemme Israël.* ([Amsterdam?], 1625). The only reference within the work to its Bohemian context is the concluding chronogram: "VInDICIae HUssIane BoheMIs VenerUnt." On account of its unspecif-

This trend, however, was to be short-lived. In a slew of pamphlets written in January 1625, prompted largely by a vision he had experienced on New Year's Day, Felgenhauer returned to political prophecy. While this was partly in response to those who derided his earlier unfulfilled prophecies ("Zur Antwort allen Spöttern unnd ungläubigen ThierFreunden"), it was also to announce a bold new calendar for Christ's return.[22] Felgenhauer prophesied that between the summers of 1625 and 1626 incredible transformations would take place throughout the world. The armies of the United Provinces, led by John Maurice of Nassau-Siegen (1604–79), would storm Bohemia and return Frederick V to the throne, just as the ten lost tribes of Israel would be rediscovered and the Jews would convert *en masse* to Christianity.[23] The New Jerusalem would then descend to earth, initiating a wonderful golden age.

A testament to the fact that Felgenhauer was shaken by his unfulfilled prophecies for 1623 was his uncharacteristic employment of other recent prophecies concerning Bohemia's fate to support his own predictions. These authorities included Sigismund Gartamar's sixteenth-century visions of the Lion of Midnight, as well as the mysterious *Horologium Hussianum* (The Hussite Clock), a prophecy said to be found in a strange box discovered in a Prague library, supposedly created by the Czech reformer Jan Huss, which predicted that in 1626 the world would be united into one flock under one shepherd.[24] In any event, with the fulfilment of these realigned prophecies, Felgenhauer would finally be vindicated:

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ic nature, the *Prodromus* remains Felgenhauer's fullest statement on the doctrine of the millennium.

[22] [Paul Felgenhauer], *Flos propheticus* [. . .] *Darinnen die Vornembste Geheimnuß von der letzten Zeit* [. . .] *deutlich außgeleget werden/ Nemblich von den Todten/ Grossen/ und Kleinen Lewen/ wie sie nemblich dieß 1625. und 1626. Jahr grosse gewaltige fürtreffliche Dinge und Wunder verrichten und vollbringen werden* ([Amsterdam], 1625), sig. A1r.

[23] In addition to the re-issued *Flos Propheticus* other works written in early 1625 included [Paul Felgenhauer], *Calendarium Novum-Propheticum Iubilaeum Super Annum iam dum Novum verè Novum incipientem M.DC.XXV* ([Amsterdam], 1625), esp. 49–53; [Paul Felgenhauer], *Leo Septentrionalis* [. . .] *Mit seinen fürnembsten Wundern/ als in einem Spiegel vns allen fürgezeiget/ zu dieser letzten Zeit* ([Amsterdam], 1625); [Paul Felgenhauer], *Tuba visitationis* [. . .] *Die da verkündiget der gantzen weyten Welt/ ins gemein/ die Stunde der versuchung/ so da kompt/ vnd kommen ist/ vber den gantzen Erdenkreyß* ([Amsterdam, 1625]).

[24] Sigismund Gartamar, *Vision oder gesicht Von des wahren Mitternächtigen Leüwens Mutigen ausgang,* [. . .] *itzo erstlich von einem Gutten treühertzigen Freündt in Truck geben* ([Leipzig?], 1622); *Gründtliche Offenbarung und eigentliche Abbildung/ einer geheimen*

> Blessed is he who is not condemned by his own heart, for he shall know true joy; hence shall I scorn all who think my prophecies are but the spirit of lies and a pretty fairy tale: you will see it [i.e., the millennial kingdom], you will hear it, and you will know shame in your hearts.[25]

However, as 1625 wore on, and the events he had anticipated stubbornly refused to occur, Felgenhauer must once again have endured the sickening feeling that his prophecies—and his hopes—for his beloved Bohemian homeland would come to naught. Toward the end of 1625—wracked by a considerable crisis of conscience in the midst of what was supposed to be his prophetic jubilee year—Felgenhauer abandoned any hope of seeing his prophecies realized. Although in his *Tuba visitationis* (Horn of Visitation, 1625) Felgenhauer had confidently predicted that his opponents would be forced to confess the shame in their hearts when his predictions saw fruition, ultimately it was Felgenhauer himself who was forced to acknowledge his sins and beg forgiveness before God and all the people of the world: the arena for this public confession was his *Speculum Poenitentiae* (1625).

2. *Felgenhauer's* Speculum Poenitentiae

The *Speculum Poenitentiae* is extant in one manuscript copy, seventy-seven quarto pages in length, and is preserved in the collection of the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek in Hanover.[26] It is bound

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denckwürdigen Prophecey/ welche in diesem 1621 Jahr/ zu Prag bey S. Jacob in der Bibliothec/ auff und in einem kleinen silbern vergüldten Lädlein oder Kästlein gefunden worden ([Prague?], 1621). Both are cited in [Felgenhauer]: *Calendarium Novum-Propheticum Iubilaeum*, 51 and [Felgenhauer], *Leo Septentrionalis*, 5, which also reprints both prophecies. On the *Horologium*, see Josef Volf, "Horologium Hussianum — Orloj husitský," in *Časopis musea královstvi českého* 86 (1912): 305–12, here incorrectly attributed to Felgenhauer. See also Hubková, *Fridrich Falcký*, 371–73, 839; Urbánek, *Eschatologie, vědění a politika*, 115, n. 381.

[25] [Felgenhauer], *Tvba visitationis*, 7. "Wohl dem, welchen sein herz nicht verdampt, dann der wirdt die rechte Frewdigkeit haben, als dann will ich ewer aller auch wider spotten/ die ir mich bißher mit meinen Weissagungen nur für einen Lügengeist vnd für ein Märlein gehalten. Ihr werdets sehen/ ihr werdets hören, vnd euch ins herz hinein schämen."

[26] Paul Felgenhauer, "Speculum Poenitentiae," shelfmark T-A 444 (4), Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hanover (henceforth, *Speculum*). The manuscript contains at least two different series of foliations, which make it clear that the *Speculum* was once bound together with a larger number of tracts. Due to rebinding

along with several other prophetic works by Felgenhauer from his Bohemian phase, together with two pamphlets by another Lutheran dissident, Johann Bannier (d. 1625).[27] In the past, there has been some question about the nature of the *Speculum* manuscript. E. G. Wolters noted that the Hanover *Speculum* featured the words "printed in the year 1625" ("Getruckt im Jahr 1625") on its title page, and suggested that the manuscript was an "Abschrift" (copy) prepared from the printed edition.[28] This notation, however, appears to me to have been added at a later point and suggests that we are probably dealing with the fair copy from which the printed edition was set, although no printed copies are known to be extant.[29] There is no reason to doubt that a printed version was issued in 1625. As will be made clear below, it seems that Felgenhauer always intended to distribute the text as widely as possible.

The manuscript is written in two neat and distinct hands. The first, a tiny gothic hand (pp. 1, 40–77), is Felgenhauer's own, while the second, a larger florid hand (pp. 2–40), is that of his fiancée, Margarethe Junghauß, whom he would marry in 1631.[30] Befitting a fair copy, the text is uniformly easy to read, and corrections are extremely sparse. In terms of composition, the *Speculum* is structured—if such a term is appropriate—in a straightforward

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and trimming, many of these foliations are only partially visible. The page numbers employed here are "virtual," and assume that the pages of the manuscript are numbered consecutively from page one (the title page) to seventy-seven (final page of the text).

[27] Johann Bannier, *Lutherischer Spiegel in welchen zu sehen/ was der rechte lutherische Glaube ist/ vnd was er in den Menschen wircke die ihm überkommen haben* ([*Helsingør*?], 1625); [Johann Bannier?], *Vom grossen Abendtmahl deß Herrn/ wie vns darin der himmlische Vater mit dem Brote Gottes speiset das vom Himmel kömpt vnd gibt der welt das Leben* (Leipzig, 1625). On Bannier, see Michael Schippan, "Zwei Havelberger Weigelianer aus der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges: Pantaleon Trappe und Johann Bannier," in *Europa in der frühen Neuzeit: Festschrift für Günter Mühlpfordt*, ed. Erich Donnert, 2 vols. (Cologne, Weimar & Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), 2:383–404.

[28] Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:74. This opinion was expressed independently in Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock,* 25, n. 1, and repeated in Dünnhaupt, *Personalbibliographien*, 2:1461.

[29] Jürgen Beyer has informed me that the orthography throughout the *Speculum* (including the rendering of detached separable prefixes, and inclusion of variable phonetic spellings), while not uncommon in manuscript works of the 1620s, is rarely encountered in contemporary printed books: further evidence that this manuscript preceded any printed version.

[30] Compare Margarethe Felgenhauer's letter to Syke authorities in "Peinliche Verurteiling," fols. 145r–46v.

manner. Following the title page, the text is prefaced by an eleven page foreword addressed to the reader, followed by an unbroken, wandering narrative which fills the remaining sixty-five pages. The *Speculum* itself has all the hallmarks of a work that was written in a blitz of frenetic activity. It wanders frequently from the thrust of its argument and is highly repetitive, filled with redundant elaboration. An encounter with a "simple man" promised on page nineteen, for example, is only finally discussed on page fifty-six. It would not be surprising if it was composed in a single, harried sitting.

The *Speculum* has three major foci. First, it presents an opportunity for Felgenhauer to castigate himself on account of his failures. Second, it provides a discourse on the nature of true penance. Third, it implores readers to follow Felgenhauer's example, in order that they may inherit the power to discern divine messages and commands, from false ones. Thus, the fact that the *Speculum* is a difficult work to read is not solely attributable to its meandering structure. In its pages, Felgenhauer brings to bear the full brunt of his rage at his own failings. Page after page is filled with unrelenting self-criticism, where Felgenhauer decries himself as: "God's foremost sinner [...] a vile criminal [...] the lowliest sinner of the world."[31] While a personal jeremiad of this sort is difficult for a modern reader to endure, for Felgenhauer himself, it must have been cathartic. Indeed, his intention in composing the *Speculum* is announced by the citation of Jeremiah 31:18–19, an exhortation to repentance, on the title page.

In his epistle to the reader Felgenhauer states that the world has now entered its apocalyptic final age and announces that it is the duty of devout men and women everywhere to take heed of the signs of the times and do penance. What is important above all else for the health and salvation of the individual's soul is humility before God, and an appreciation of human fallibility. If Felgenhauer in this text was asking God and himself for forgiveness, he was also asking it of his readers: catharsis and communication in a single, potent mixture.

But what, precisely, was true penance? According to Felgenhauer, true penance begins not by asking what transgressions a stranger has committed, but rather by looking inward and demanding such

[31] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 46–48; "der vorderster Sünder Gottes [...] ein abscheulicher Verbrecher [...] der niedrigste Sünder der Welt."

answers of oneself.[32] After identifying and meditating upon one's sins, one must confess these sins openly and to all, and abase and humiliate ("demutigen vnd erniedrigen") oneself both inwardly—that is, spiritually—and outwardly, through public demonstration. Important above all for Felgenhauer, however, was that having admitted one's sins, one had to be careful never to repeat them. It is through these means alone that the individual can be led to true rebirth in the spirit of Christ.[33] Because such a practice is naturally a difficult task, Felgenhauer argues that mankind requires examples of true penance to inspire them in their efforts.[34] While the Bible is filled with such examples, the modern world which delights and rejoices in sin is generally bereft of them. It has thus fallen to Felgenhauer to provide a contemporary example of true penance to his readers, so that all shall be in a position to atone for their own sins. "Therefore," the prophet declares, "I openly and happily admit herein my own mistakes where I have erred."[35]

As one might expect, a major mistake to which Felgenhauer admits in the *Speculum* is the issue of disconfirmed prophecy; more specifically the failure of his predictions concerning the dawning of an earthly millennium in 1623 and 1625. Although Felgenhauer does not explicitly reference these prophecies—indeed, much to the chagrin of his bibliographers, he only mentions explicitly one work, the *Zeit Spiegel*, among "several other writings" (*etlichen wenigen Schrifften*)—the confession remains nonetheless substantial:

> Heedlessly, without forethought and out of blind wisdom, I have ventured to prophesy of particulars and matters that have not in the course of time transpired, [...] indeed ventured to name times, days, and moons when such things should come to pass; moreover, I have at times, with importunate zeal, gone forth and fancied also that all this was done truly and wisely too, as if I were a great man and foremost teacher among all.[36]

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[32] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 40–51.

[33] See Wolters, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 2:71.

[34] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 4, 5, 16–17.

[35] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 19. "[A]lso bekenne ich auch hiermit offentlich gerne meine fehle, darinnen ich geirret."

[36] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 18–19. "Ich [habe] vermeßentlich, vnbedachtsam, vnd auß blinder weißheit vnterstanden, besonderer specialis vnd dinge zu weissagen welche sich hernach in der Zeit so nicht befunden [...] vnd mich auch vnterstanden Zeit tage vnd monden zubenhamen, in welchen dieses vnd Jenne

Yet as this passage demonstrates, failed prophecy was but an outward manifestation of Felgenhauer's major sins of pride and arrogance. Aside from confidently expounding his own predictions, he took it upon himself to judge others, harshly, for choosing not to follow his teachings, believing falsely that his own position was righteous. This "criminal arrogance" (*verbrecheliche Hoffarth*), as Felgenhauer termed it, pervaded and corrupted his writings to the extent that, even "when he managed to speak the truth, this truth was tainted with lies."[37] Indeed, whatever good Felgenhauer wrought in his books was therefore more than compensated for by his blasphemous pronunciations:

> Though I have at times exhorted in my few humble writings to good effect, humbly borne witness to the truth and summoned others to a fine awareness by the grace of God; nonetheless, at other times, on account of my mistakes and errors, [I have] thereby also blasphemed that which was good.[38]

The prophet's duty in composing the *Speculum* therefore was as much to inform and console his readers as himself; those he had misled and seduced away from the teachings of God.[39] The reasons behind Felgenhauer's personal failures were legion. Chief of all, however, was Satan, under whose influence Felgenhauer had regularly misunderstood the communications or visions granted him by the Holy Spirit or by God himself:

> For though the Father of Lights from whom all good gifts come [James 1:17] graced me by his spirit with his gift of an enduring blessed insight, with which I was able to regard Scripture, by the grace of God, with the eyes of spiritual comprehension and without human effort or teaching, yet Satan crept behind me, and intermixed himself into

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geschehen solte, vnd zwar nicht alleine dießes, sondern das auch darbenebenn bißweilen mit vnzeitigen Eiffer herauß gefaren vnd mir geleichwol eingebildet, alß ob es alles recht weißlich vnd wol gethan were, vnd alß ob ich ein großer Mann vnd fvrnemester lehrer vnter allen were."

[37] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 7–8.

[38] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 19. "Ob ich nun zwar auch in meinen wenigen schrifften hin vnd wieder auch zum guten ehrmanet, durch Gottes gnade in einfaldt die warheit bezeuget vnd zu einen feinnen ehr kentnuß andere ahn gewiesen, so ist doch wegen meiner fehle vnd irrungen auf der andern Zeiten, auch das gute gleichsam hiemit verlestert wurden."

[39] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 8, 21, 55.

> my writings, as he did to the words of the Apostle Peter [Luke 22:54–60] and seduced me with his lies and darkness.[40]

Thus led by the devil, Felgenhauer became complacent, overconfident, and arrogant. This arrogance manifested itself in various ways; in his haughty and dismissive polemic with Rost after 1622 and in the confident realignment of his predictions for 1625 after their initial disconfirmation in 1623.

During this period the simple failure of his prophecies was, at least at first, not enough to lead him to admit and fully recognize the magnitude of his errors. Nor was it enough for him to question the "divine" origin of his prophecies. Gradually, however, the cumulative impact of a bad conscience (*schlechtes Gewissen*) and a general public recognition of the failure of his prophecies began to take their toll.[41] The final impetus was provided by an experience which Felgenhauer likened to the conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1–31).[42] This was an admonishment by a "simple man" who reminded him, powerfully, of the failure of his prophecies and of his duty to do the right thing by himself and by God.

This man was the Braunschweig lay prophet and visionary Hans Engelbrecht (1599–1642).[43] Engelbrecht's notoriety and subsequent effectiveness as a *Bußprophet* or lay prophet derived mainly from the bizarre circumstances of his initial contact with the divine. In 1622, following a lengthy period of depression during which he ques-

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[40] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 18. "[D]en ob mich zwar den vater des lichts, von welchem alle gute gaben kommen, in Christo durch seinen Geist begnadet mit seinem ~~gnaden~~ [*F. corrects:* gaben] ihnn seeligh warhenden ehr kentnuße, also das ich durch Gottes gnade mit den Augen des Geistlichen verstandes, die schrifft habe ahnschawen konnen ohne menichliches zu thun vnd lehrer, so hat mich doch der Satan hinter schlichen, vnd sich in meine schrifften wie dem apostell Petro in seine wort eingemenget, mich mit seinen Lugen vnd finsternuß verfuhrt."

[41] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 20. "weil meine fele jederman bekanndt sein."

[42] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 7–9.

[43] August Friedrich Wilhelm Beste, "Hans Engelbrecht. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mystik des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie*, Neue Folge 14 (1844): 122–55. Jürgen Beyer, *Lay Prophets in Lutheran Europe 1550–1750* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), ch. 6; Leigh T.I. Penman, "The Unanticipated Millennium: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Chiliastic Error in Paul Egard's *Posaune der göttlichen Gnade und Liechts* (1623)," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 35 (2009): 11–45, here 28–29; Philipp Julius Rehtmeyer, *Historiæ ecclesiasticæ inclytæ urbis Brunsvigæ*, vol. 4 (Braunschweig, 1715), 417–32, 472–83, with documents edited in (1715) vol. 5, 279–347; Claire Gantet, "Hans Engelbrecht and the Uncertainty of Protestant Miracles," in *Miracles as Epistemic Things,* ed. Fernando Vidal (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, forthcoming).

tioned his native Lutheran faith and his own spirituality, Engelbrecht died. He remained dead for approximately twelve hours until, just as his mother was about to cover him with a burial cloth, he awoke and sprang from his bed. Yet Engelbrecht had not only returned to life; he also brought back with him ostensibly first-hand visions of heaven and hell which he used to urge others to repentance. An eighteenth-century English translation of his many prophecies and visions therefore appeared under the not inappropriate title *The German Lazarus*.[44]

Engelbrecht's visions continued intermittently after his resurrection. Initially, Church authorities in Braunschweig were content to entertain his activities, but as it became clear that the populace were more inclined to follow Engelbrecht's teachings than those of their own preachers, he became the subject of an inquisitorial procedure.[45] Although Engelbrecht was ultimately released, in early 1625 he decided to leave Braunschweig and embark on a tour of northern Germany, preaching his message of repentance in Lüneburg, Glückstadt, Oldenburg, Hamburg and throughout Schleswig and Holstein. He was almost universally praised during his travels, by lay and cleric alike. Paul Egard (ca. 1578–1655), evangelical pastor in Nortorf, recognized in Engelbrecht "no deceit or guile" (*kein Betrug noch Falschheit*) but a man devoted to true spirituality "led and propelled by the good spirit of God" (*durch den guten Geist Gottes getrieben und geführet*).[46] As in the case of the Lusatian theosopher Jacob Böhme (1575–1624), Engelbrecht's status as a lowly manual labourer—he was a *Tuchmacher*, or clothier, just as Böhme was a cobbler—was cited as proof of his simple and honest nature.

Felgenhauer probably encountered Engelbrecht in Hamburg, perhaps as early as the summer of 1625.[47] In the *Speculum* he prefaced his account of their meeting by stating that from time to time

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[44] [Hans Engelbrecht], *The German Lazarus: Being a Plain and Faithful Account of the Extraordinary Events That Happened to John Engelbrecht of Brunswick* (London, 1707).

[45] Beste, "Engelbrecht," 144–45.

[46] See Penman, "Unanticipated Millennium," 28.

[47] See Wolter, "Felgenhauers Leben und Wirken," 1:66–67, who suggests that the meeting took place at the beginning of 1625. This is unlikely, given that in January Felgenhauer wrote and printed several Bohemian prophecies; see above at note 23. Volf, "Pavel Felgenhauer," 104–5, gives a résumé of the mutual influences of Engelbrecht and Felgenhauer on one another, although he did not appear to know the *Speculum*.

God sent simple people (*einfeltige Leute*) out into the world to preach about love and belief and to exhort others to do penance. With probable reference to the contemporary antinomian doctrines being spread by Esajas Stiefel (1561–1627) in Thuringia, Felgenhauer states that such people may be distinguished from false prophets—and the false spirits which speak through them—by the fact that they do not claim that every person is, like themselves, another Christ, but that they are fallible, human, and themselves in dire need of penitence.[48]

Felgenhauer's meeting with Engelbrecht was occasioned by an angelic vision that the latter had experienced, which implored the Braunschweig lay prophet to seek out Felgenhauer in order to reprimand him for his many sins.[49] Felgenhauer records the encounter thus:

> Now it also came to pass and was predetermined for me that I have been sharply and bitterly admonished by a simple man by the name of Hans Engelbrecht of Braunschweig, a journeyman, who told me that God had ordered him via an angel to carry out this task to reprimand me in the best and most painful manner, that I should abstain from my dull-witted, mendacious, secret, and deeply ingrained arrogance, from my inappropriate prophecies and my pharisaical hypocrisy. So as to avoid many damages and dishonours, I should embrace the true love [and] follow in the footsteps of the deepest humility of Christ.[50]

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[48] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 57. "die falschen Propheten [...] sprech[en] hir ist Christus, dar ist Christus vnd vermeinet vns zu andern Göttern zu fuhren." Cf. Matthew 24:23; Mark 13:21. On Stiefel, see Ulman Weiß, *Die Lebenswelten des Esajas Stiefel oder vom Umgang mit Dissidenten* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007).

[49] Engelbrecht experienced a vision shortly before Pentecost (May or June 1625) in the house of Dieterich Neubauer of Hamburg. See Engelbrecht, *Göttlich und himmlisch Mandat und Befehl durch einen heiligen Engel, Auff was Weise man sich im Kreutz und jeder in seinem Stande zu verhalten* (Bremen, 1625).

[50] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 57. "Also nun ist es mir auch begegnet vnnd wird ersehen, daß ich vonn einem einfeltigen Menschen mit nahmes Hanß Engelbrecht vonn Braunschweigk einen hand werks gesellen, bin hart vnnd scharf ver mahnet werden, mit solchen bescheidt, das es Ihn von Gott durch einen Engell mir befohlen worden, er solte es thue, vnd mich aufs allerbeste vnd scharfste ermahnen, daß ich vonn meinem bluden lugendunckell himlich verborgener innerlicher hoffarth, von meinem Vnzeitigen wißagen vnnd Phariseischen haucheley solte enstehen, vnd die rechte liebe ergreiffen, auch inn die tiefste demuth Christi tretten, damit ich nicht zu einigen schanden vnd schaden kommen möchte."

Felgenhauer himself, still in the throes of his "criminal arrogance," despite the stubborn refusal of events to conform to his predictions, was initially sceptical of Engelbrecht's claims and affronted by this stranger's demands that he admit his many sins:

> By the grace of God I at first looked askance at such talk and at this harsh sermon exhorting me to repent and though I still sought to vindicate myself somehow, yet my conscience preached to me of the humility of Christ, until I gazed fully upon [Engelbrecht's exhortation] and took it to heart by the grace of God, resisting it until, by the finger of God, it annihilated and mortified my heart, and only then could I bow before the grace of God, and through his counsel acknowledge my hidden and ingrained sins. Now I recognize that God gave me this precious reproach by means of the aforementioned simple man, and I judge in my heart that his words are very good, useful, and salutary, and I have not discarded them.[51]

Although this passage demonstrates that Felgenhauer was aware of the problematic nature of visions in general, his encounter with Engelbrecht raises a number of questions: How could he be certain that Engelbrecht's angelic vision which had prompted the crucial admonishment was indeed from God, when it might just as easily have been the product of the devil's machinations? How could he be sure that the spirits who delivered their message to Engelbrecht had indeed been discerned correctly?

The answer to these questions was surprisingly straightforward. Namely, like himself Felgenhauer considered Engelbrecht, along with a handful of other visionary new prophets, to be the sole vanguards of God's divine message on earth.[52] The matter of discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*), a contemplative theological practice derived from Paul's words in 1 John 4:1 ("Beloved,

[51] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 57. "Solche rede vnnd scharffe buspredigt nun hab ich durch Gottes gnade erstlich zwar nur mit einem Auge angesehen, vnd noch in etwas mich vermeint zu recht ferttigen, aber mein gewißen predigte mir selbst von der demuth Christi, so lange biß ich es mit beyden augen recht betrachtet, vnnd durch Gottes gnade zu hertzen genommen habe, allso daß so darwider geschlagen wurde, daß ich nun meinen hertzen zu lauter nichts vnd todt wurde durch den finger Gottes, vnnd denn allererst zum rathen Erkentnus meiner jnnerlichen verborgenen Sunden durch Gottes gnade gebeugete. Diese theuer vermahnung nun solche mir Gott durch benampten Einfeltigen Menschen hatt sagen laßen erkenne ich vnd hab ich erkant in meinem hertzen fur sehr guth, nützlich vnd heylsam, vnd hab sie nicht hinter mich geworffen."

[52] See "Peinliche Verurteilung," fol. 71v.

believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God"), was therefore implicit. Felgenhauer's discussion of his encounter with Engelbrecht makes clear that for him the divine or demonic origin of a vision was irrelevant, if one focused on the truthfulness of its message which in turn could be recognized by the truly penitent. In this fashion, Felgenhauer heeded less the command to "try the spirits," and instead privileged Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to "prove all things" and "hold fast to that which is good." Or, as he put it:

> For I take notice foremost and above all of my own conscience and of my own heart and must therefore confess that I am here and again a very great sinner, to the extent that it is only right that I must convert myself and find my way to the true penitence and humility, so that I may be convinced in my own conscience, which is like a thousand witnesses, and so that I will be elevated to that place, and may not bind myself in flesh and blood, nor dispute about whether it is true that an angel appeared to the aforesaid fellow. For I do not see such things with my eyes, rather with my heart; if I witness the truth in my heart and conscience, the rest shall take care of itself.[53]

Such an attitude was typical of Felgenhauer's anthropocentric theosophy which internalised the spiritual experience. This stood in stark contrast to the external and communal experience advocated by the hated *Mauerkirchen*.

In any event, following his acceptance of Engelbrecht's exhortations Felgenhauer had no choice but to reassess his life and to cleanse himself by means of an humiliating penance, ultimately manifested in the *Speculum*. As Felgenhauer put it, God had through various means opened his eyes to the true light of Christ and showed him the need to repent of his sins in anticipation of the imminent Kingdom of God, as prophesied in Revelation 20.[54] This

[53] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 57–58. "[I]ch sehe furnehmlich vnd fur allen dingen auf mein eigen gewißen, in mein eigen hertz vnnd muß bekennen, daß ich mir diesen vnd jenen ein sehr großer sunder bin, derowegen es allermaßen billich ist, das ich mich bekehren, vnnd zu der rechten buße vnd demuth finde, will ich deßen am meinem gewißen vberzeuget bin, daßen ich bezüchtiget werde, vnd darf do nicht viel mit fleisch vnd bluth mich binden, *conscientia enim mille testis*, auch nicht viel disputieren, ob es auch wahr sey, daß diesem bemeltem Menschen ein Engell erschienen, denn dieses sehe ich alles nicht an, sondern mein Eigen hertz, wenn ich aber nun die wahrheit in meinen eignen hertzen vnnd gewißen empfindt, so wird sich das andern schon selbst schlichten."

[54] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 10, 11, 66.

kingdom, however—as Felgenhauer now recognized—would not be an earthly millennial paradise of the kind he anticipated prior to 1623, when an all too human desire for political vengeance and the resurrection of his beloved Bohemian patria had led him, with the assistance of Satan, into error. At the conclusion of his epistle to the reader which prefaced the *Speculum*, Felgenhauer cited Romans 14:17–18; "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."[55] If there was a key message that Felgenhauer had derived from his prophetic folly—outside of the necessity of humility—then surely this was it. Certainly, the millennium would come, and at that time the world would undergo severe changes; political, spiritual, and otherwise. This millennium, however, would not be contingent upon worldly concerns but would arrive by the judgment of God alone.

3. *Felgenhauer and Failed Prophecy*

The social and psychological effect of failed prophecy on groups and individuals has long been of interest to social psychologists, anthropologists, and, of course, historians—particularly historians of religion—who are frequently tasked to deal with the complex aftermath of disconfirmed prophecy. The classic formulation of the problem resultant of unfulfilled prophecy was conceived by the social psychologists Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, and presented in their work *When Prophecy Fails* (1956).

> Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief, that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally, suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong: what will happen?[56]

In their influential book, which documented the authors' infiltration of an American UFO cult in the first half of the 1950s, and the reaction of members of this sect to a failed messianic prophecy, the psychologists sketched out the theory of cognitive dissonance to explain an unexpected reaction to disconfirmed prophecy:

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[55] Felgenhauer, *Speculum,* 11.

[56] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*, 2nd ed. (London: Pinter & Martin, Ltd., 2008), 3.

> The individual will frequently emerge [from the disconfirmation of belief], not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before. Indeed, he may even show a new fervor about convincing and converting other people to his view.[57]

The reason for this unexpected reaction was, as Festinger explained, the effect of cognitive dissonance. In essence, cognitive dissonance arises when the "beliefs, values, or opinions individuals hold (that is, their cognitions) come into conflict with their experience of reality."[58] In terms of failed prophecy, the fact that "the predicted events did not occur is dissonant with continuing to believe both the prediction and the remainder of the ideology of which the prediction was the central item. The failure of the prediction is also dissonant with all the actions that the believer took in preparation for its fulfilment."[59] Festinger held that the failure of a prophecy or belief predicated on an anticipated prophetic event would lead to increased proselytising, not a relinquishment of the prophesied expectation, which indeed forms the core part of the prophet's ideology.

Approaching this material from a historical perspective, one can immediately see certain problems inherent in Festinger's thesis. First, one of the core assumptions of the theory is that the prophecy which was disconfirmed forms the "central item" of the ideology of the prophet. If prophecy is accepted as a social phenomenon, then the prediction itself must be an expression of, and congruent with, intellectual, social, and other conditions which themselves do not necessarily change for better or worse following the failure of the prophecy in question. The mental world which engendered the prophecy is thus normally far broader and more resilient than the prophecy itself. Second, the theory posits that the cognitive dissonance created by disconfirmed prophecy leads not only to a

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[57] Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*, 3.

[58] Jon R. Stone, introduction to *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4. For further perspectives on cognitive dissonance and prophecy, see Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978); E. Harmon-Jones and J. Mills, *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology* (Washington: American Psychlogical Association, 1999); Diana G. Tumminia, *When Prophecy Never Fails: Myth and Reality in a Flying-Saucer Group* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005).

[59] Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*, 4.

renewed dedication to truth of the prophecy—for the dissolution of dissonance by admitting failure would be more painful than tolerating the dissonance of maintaining the prophetic ideology—but also that, following disconfirmation, the prophet will seek to convert others to his cause by proselytising.

As the preceding discussion of Felgenhauer's biography and the *Speculum Poenitentiae* suggests, his reactions can be said to only partially conform to the pattern anticipated by Festinger. After the disconfirmation of his predictions for 1623, Felgenhauer initially reconceptualised his expectations, pointing instead to a new year of jubilation between 1625 and 1626. In other words, he maintained the veracity of his initial prediction. By means of the spate of pamphlets issued early in 1625 publicizing his revised expectations, Felgenhauer could be said to have continued proselytising for his original prophetic cause. While this reaction is consistent with Festinger's expectations, what occurred next is not.

Although Felgenhauer had refocused his prophetic energies, he was evidently deeply shaken by the initial failure of his predictions to come to fruition and harboured doubts about the rectitude of his statements. When these doubts were given voice by Engelbrecht in 1625, Felgenhauer reluctantly admitted that his prophesying was folly. Tellingly, his admission of this occurred well before the year of jubilation in 1625–26 had concluded, demonstrating that Felgenhauer's private doubts triumphed before time had the opportunity to refute his expectations once again. Therefore, in the *Speculum,* he submitted himself to an humiliating public penance. Rather than proselytising on the basis of his original millennial expectations, Felgenhauer demanded that others shy away from making the same kind of predictions in which he had indulged, and that they refrain from exhibiting the "criminal arrogance" which characterised his own activities. Felgenhauer's reaction was therefore entirely unanticipated by Festinger's original formulation of what occurs when prophecy fails.[60]

[60] Equally, Felgenhauer's reaction also diverges from the pattern of behaviour asserted by J. Gordon Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens when Prophecy Fails," in *Expecting Armageddon*, 145–58, who argued that failed prophecy does not usually result in increased proselytising based on the initial predictions, but rather engenders a spiritualized reconceptualisation of the prophecy.

Felgenhauer's case, however may not be an ideal example with which to test Festinger's conclusions. In formulating his thesis, Festinger and his colleagues suggested that they would expect to observe "increased fervor following the disconfirmation of a belief" only when five specific conditions were fulfilled. First, this belief must be held with a deep conviction and have some relevance to what the believer does or how he behaves. Second, for the sake of this belief he must have taken some important action that is difficult to undo. Third, the belief must be specific so that events may unequivocally refute the belief. Fourth, evidence of undeniable disconfirmation must be recognized by the believer. Finally, the individual believer must have social support, which consists of "a group of convinced persons who can support one another." As Festinger comments, it is "unlikely that one isolated believer could withstand this kind of disconfirming evidence."[61]

Felgenhauer's circumstances certainly fulfil the first four of these criteria, however the fifth is problematic. We do not, at present, know enough about Felgenhauer's personal circumstances between 1623 and 1625 to determine whether he was surrounded by a sympathetic network which could soften the blow of unfulfilled predictions. The fact that he was still largely itinerant indicates that he may not have had access to the consistent source of "social support" required by Festinger.

However, I suggest that such support could be intellectual and spiritual as well as social. For Felgenhauer was far from being the only one of his contemporaries who was convinced that some kind of imminent change, through the intervention of God on earth, was expected to occur in or shortly after 1623. Felgenhauer was one of a few dozen so-called "new prophets"; an inchoate group of disgruntled critics of confessionalised religion which emerged primarily from within the Lutheran confessional culture in the Holy Roman Empire before 1630. They were inspired to express their criticisms of the established Church by a variety of different circumstances and experiences.[62] As their many theological opponents recognized, this company was bound together by an ideology, if one may call it that, of dissent. All were critical of the *Mauerkirchen* and held fast to

[61] Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*, 4.

[62] See Leigh T.I. Penman, *Unanticipated Millenniums: Chiliastic Thought in Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming), chs. 1–2.

the idea that true spirituality could only be accessed through the Holy Spirit. To one anonymous supporter, it was called "the Pentecostal or Whit-school (*Pfingstschule*) of the Holy Spirit."[63] Paul Nagel called it the "School of the Holy Spirit."[64] To Philip Ziegler it was known as the "Most Sublime School of the Cross and of the Holy Spirit."[65] Felgenhauer himself wrote of a spiritual School in which one might learn the secrets of Daniel, Esdras, and other ancient authorities.[66] Several of these figures were in epistolary contact with one another.[67]

The inspirations for these expressions were diverse. Several had their hopes impacted on by the crisis of devotion which had emerged from within Lutheranism around 1600, others were inspired by Johann Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* (True Christianity, 1605–10), or the spiritualist philosophies of Valentin Weigel (1533–88) and Paracelsus (1493–1541). Still others, like Felgenhauer, were inspired by the Bohemian conflict, and the multiple economic, social, and spiritual crises it engendered. A point of reference for many, however, was the date 1623. This was the year in which an important astronomical event, the grand conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn would take place in the fiery trigon of the zodiac. Several new prophets expressed the opinion that a chiliastic age would begin sometime between 1623 and 1625. Together, at least fifty-six

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[63] *Schola Spiritus Sancti: Das ist, die Schule des H. Geistes; Darin als in ultimo Sæculorum Sæculo, gelehret wirdt* (Neuenstadt [Halle?], 1624), 10.

[64] Paul Nagel, *Tabula Aurea M. Pauli Nagelii Lips. Mathematici, Darinnen Er den Andern Theil seiner Philosophiae Novae proponiren vnd fürstellen thut* ([Halle], 1624), sig. A2r.

[65] Philip Ziegler, *AntiArnoldus et AntiNagelius, Das ist: Grundlicher Beweiß, das weder die Zehen Grunde M. Phillipi Arnoldi* [. . .] *die Dritte und güldene Zeit des Heiligen Geistes umbstossen, Noch die eilff Gegengründe M. Pauli Nagelli.* ([Hamburg], 1622), 49.

[66] Felgenhauer, *Apologeticus*, 22.

[67] See Noémi Viskolcz, *Reformációs Könyvek: Tervek az evangélikus egyház megújítására* (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár & Universitas Kiadó, 2006), 148–54, which documents Felgenhauer's significance to Johann Permeier's (1597–1644) correspondents; Leigh T.I. Penman, "Prophecy, Alchemy and Strategies of Dissident Communication: A 1630 Letter from the Bohemian Chiliast Paul Felgenhauer (1593–ca. 1677) to the Leipzig Physician Arnold Kerner," *Acta Comeniana* 24, no. 48 (2011): 115–32, which shows Felgenhauer's connections to individuals around Jakob Böhme and Paul Nagel; and, Vladimír Urbánek, "Ve stínu J.A. Komenského: Česká exilová intelligence v Hartlib Papers," *Studia Comeniana et historica* 26, no. 55/56 (1996): 123–36, which briefly sketches Felgenhauer's contact with the network of the Anglo-Prussian intelligencer Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600–62).

such prophets, including Felgenhauer, authored more than 250 unique prophetic works which were printed in more than 350 editions or issues before 1630 concerning the matter.[68] Felgenhauer's prophetic expectations were, in other words, not those of a lone wolf but rather part of a broader movement within the Lutheran confessional spectrum that anticipated a drastic change in the spiritual and worldly order which would occur during the middle years of the 1620s.

There was, therefore, a social support network of sorts, even if only intellectual and spiritual, which could have provided inspiration for Felgenhauer to maintain his conviction in the truthfulness of his prophecy, after its initial disappointment. It is interesting, however, to compare the reactions of other new prophets to the collapse of their expectations for 1623. Some, among them Wilhelm Eo Neuheuser (d. after 1626) and a host of minor political prognosticators, chose to withdraw from the public eye altogether following disappointment. Others, such as Nicolaus Harprecht (d. 1635/1637) or Heinrich Gebhard (1579–1653), maintained a nondescript spiritualized hope for imminent change, largely held privately and condiconditioned by their individual circumstances.[69] Still others, like the Torgau chiliast Paul Nagel, equivocated failure by revising their expectations, continuing to proselytise through printed works much in the manner anticipated by Festinger and his colleagues. Like Felgenhauer's initial reaction to the disappointment of 1623, Nagel stoically faced his calumniators and opponents who revelled in his failed prediction that a spiritual millennium would dawn in 1624 in the pages of his *Prognosticon Astrologicon Auffs Jahr […] 1625* (Astrological Forecast […] for the Year 1625), by insisting that his predictions would still be fulfilled. "Do you believe," Nagel there complained, "that nothing shall come of my prophecy if it is not fulfilled in 1624? […] Spare me your barbs and insults, for as I write, the year 1624 has not yet come to an end: and who knows what to-

[68] See Penman, *Unanticipated Millenniums*, ch. 1.

[69] On Harprecht (also Hartprecht) see Ulman Weiß, "Ein dogmengetreu drapierte Dissident: Ein schwarzburgisches Pfarrershicksal aus der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges," in Donnert, *Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 1:359–82. On Gebhard, who between 1623 and 1629 published several chiliastic works under the pseudonym Gottlieb Heylandt, see Erich Koch, "Chiliasmus am reussischen Hof im 17. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 69 (2000): 48–60.

day or tomorrow might bring?"[70] Later in the same work, Nagel intimated that the predictions which did not see fruition in 1624 would surely do so later, "because what is not totally fulfilled in 1624, shall occur in 1625. Should there still be something wanting that will be fulfilled in 1626 and so on until 1627 or 1628, etc."[71] Ultimately, Nagel died in November 1624, all of his prophecies unfulfilled. A century later, Pierre Bayle characterised Nagel as "a man of so great obstinacy, that however contrary an event proved to his predictions, he would still maintain that they were true."[72]

Nagel occupied a position of social exclusion similar to that of Felgenhauer. Although, unlike his counterpart, he had long been settled in the Saxon town of Torgau where he had lived since at least 1610, his social network was limited, and he was subject to rumours, jeers and barbs from his neighbours, as well as members of his own family.[73] While he corresponded with some like-minded persons in nearby Leipzig and with members of Jakob Böhme's circle in Upper Lusatia, it seems that the impact of his own limited social support network, which was largely intellectual, caused him to react in accordance with Festinger's anticipations. From the evidence available to us, it therefore appears that the issue of a social support network may have played only a minor role in shaping Nagel and Felgenhauer's respective responses to the disconfirmation of their expectations. More important in predicting reactions to

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[70] Paul Nagel, *Prognosticon Astrologicon Auffs Jahr 1625* (Halle/Saale, [1624]), sig. C2v. "[M]eint ihr dann/ es werde aus der Weissagung nichts werden/ wenn sie im 1624. Jahre nicht zum ende lauffe [...] wer weiß/ was heute oder morgen kömpt/ spotte unnd lästere nur nicht/ denn das 1624. Jahr ist noch nicht foruber/ als ich dieses schreibt."

[71] Nagel, *Prognosticon Astrologicon*, sig. C3r. "Denn was in 1624. jahre nicht gentzlich erfüllet wird/ das wird sich erwiesen im 1625. Jahre. Solte auch in diesem noch etwas dahinden bleiben/ das wird erfüllet werden 1626. unnd so fort biß 27. oder 28. &c." Nagel had already anticipated a potential disconfirmation by revising his expectations for 1630 in his *Trigonus Igneus, was derselbe mit sich bracht in vergangenen Zeiten: Und was auch solcher fewriger Triangul/ neben der grossen Conjunction* [...] *bringen werde in dieser unser gegenwertigen Zeit* ([Halle], 1623).

[72] Pierre Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (London, 1734), 237, paraphrasing an earlier judgment of Markus Friedrich Wendelin.

[73] I have written on Nagel's circumstances in Leigh T. I. Penman, "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Crisis, Chiliasm, and Transcendence in the Thought of Paul Nagel (†1624), a Lutheran Dissident during the Time of the Thirty Years' War," *Intellectual History Review* 20, no. 2 (2010): 201–26.

disconfirmed prophecy might be the relative strength of the individual's character in processing cognitive dissonance: an inherently immeasurable factor, particularly when considered within group dynamics.

More than this, however, the divergent reactions of Nagel and Felgenhauer point to a more serious shortcoming in Festinger's thesis. This is the already-mentioned conflation of "the prophecy" with the "belief" or intellectual world which provided the matrix for the prophecy. It is abundantly clear from Felgenhauer's own works that the millennial prophecy of Frederick V's return to Prague in 1623, and later 1625–26, was just one of several aspects of a complex millenarian world picture and perhaps at that, not its most significant.[74] As the *Speculum Poenitentiae* makes clear, of central importance for Felgenhauer was the fact that it was possible for God to convey, via the Holy Spirit or divine inspiration, an authoritative wisdom unmediated by the *Mauerkirchen*. If Felgenhauer's prophecies had failed to be fulfilled, it was because he himself was influenced by the devil and a sinful pride and arrogance, which caused him to misunderstand the Holy Spirit. According to Felgenhauer, the events of 1623–25 were part of a preordained series of tests designed to strengthen his resolve, to make of him an example, like Jeremiah before him, of the necessity of true penance to the world at large. Such a persecutory worldview was inherently resilient and could accommodate all manner of disappointments, prophetic and otherwise.

Indeed, the *Speculum Poenitentiae* makes clear that, despite his ordeal, Felgenhauer never once doubted the possibility that God would pour out his grace in a manner sensible to the physical senses of this world. Once more, the issue of discernment of spirits is implicit here. Despite recognizing that demonic deception had led him to sin and corrupt the pure teachings of the Holy Spirit, Felgenhauer nevertheless maintained that he was not, and never had been "unbelieving in revelations manifested physically" ("vngeleubig an der Sinnlischen Offenbarungk").[75] Instead, Felgenhauer emerged from

[74] See in particular Joseph F. Zygmunt, "Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses," in *Expecting Armageddon*, 65–86; Joseph F. Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail: A Theoretical Perspective on the Comparative Evidence," in *Expecting Armageddon*, 87–104.

[75] Felgenhauer, *Speculum*, 7.

his divine test even more vigilant and ready to observe and obey such revelations. He stated in the *Speculum* that the true Christian is in fact beholden to accept and to prize godly revelations. According to Felgenhauer, all Christians must follow the example of Paul in Galatians 1:16. There, when God had appeared to the apostle in order "to reveal his Son in me," and to preach His word among the heathens, Paul announced that he "conferred not with flesh and blood," but rather with spirit. Equally, for Felgenhauer, who took 2 Timothy 3:16 literally, the true will of God could only be revealed through *loci* of revelatory will, acting in concert with Holy Scripture, the dissemination of which required human agents.

One can contrast the impact of Felgenhauer's worldview upon his expectations with that of Paul Nagel. Instead of relying primarily on divine revelations, between 1617 and 1624 Nagel created a precise mathematical and theological prophetic system, in which he himself featured as a major prophetic figure to guide humankind. By tethering the mysteries of the Holy Spirit to a series of numerical equations, Nagel reduced the mysteries of the Godhead to a spiritual mathematics, a prophetic clockwork which counted down to the millennium. The exasperating complexity of Nagel's interlocking biblical, astronomical, biological, and astrological calculations comprised in his view nothing less than an instrument of kings (*königliches Instrument*), which provided a Key of David or golden measure that could unlock the secrets of the kingdom of God, the *homo interior*, the mystery of true spirituality, and of the millennium.[76] Because of its interdependent nature, however, Nagel's system was, unlike Felgenhauer's more flexible revelatory theosophy, structurally unable to accommodate prophetic disconfirmation. The millennium of 1624 would, and had to, crown the calculations that had preceded it. In Nagel's case, admitting that the prophecy had been disconfirmed would be admitting the falsehood of his entire prophetic worldview: for him, as Festinger predicted, the prophecy was, in essence, the belief.

[76] On this idea, see Reinhard Breymayer, "Das *Königliche Instrument*: Eine religiös motivierte meßtechnische Utopie bei Andreas Luppius (1686), ihre Wurzeln beim Frührosenkreuzer Simon Studion (1596) und ihre Nachwirkung beim Theosophen Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1776)," in *Das Andere Wahrnehmen: Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte; August Nitschke zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. M. Kintzinger, W. Stürner, and J. Zahlten (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 1991), 509–32; Penman, "Climbing Jacob's Ladder," 221.

A consideration of Felgenhauer's *Speculum Poenitentiae* therefore suggests that the theory of cognitive dissonance as a reaction to disconfirmed prophecy, at least as initially formulated by Festinger, may require modification under certain circumstances. While it may be that Felgenhauer, and other prophets of his ilk, were too isolated from the required social support networks stipulated by Festinger to be considered genuine candidates for study concerning the effects of the theory—and indeed, major studies of cognitive dissodissonance and failed prophecy have thus far exclusively considered groups, sects, and cults— the theory faces a further, more difficult problem. This problem is that it consistently assumes that the failed prophecy is itself an article of belief, rather than recognizing that it may only be one part of a complex worldview.

4. *Conclusion*

Felgenhauer continued to issue prophetic and theosophical works until his death in Bremen in 1661.[77] But despite the significance of the *Speculum Poenitentiae* to Felgenhauer in 1625, both as a cathartic experience to its author and as a guide to the true nature of penance for its readers, in his later works Felgenhauer never mentioned the text in print. This unwillingness was not resultant of Felgenhauer's capricious rejection of the *Speculum*'s tenets, nor of a desire to forget the profound humiliation of his public penance. For Felgenhauer was happy to own his failures in other printed works,[78] as well as in conversation with relative strangers. In 1639, for example, the Scots reformer John Dury (ca. 1600–80) met Felgenhauer in Bremen, hoping to interest him in a plan for Christian union.[79] Dury found that,

[77] Ole Borch, *Olai Borrichii itinerarium, 1660-1665*, 4 vols. (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 1983), 1:227. Dated 21 September 1661. "[Ludwig Friedrich] Giftheilium nuper Amstelodami obiise, et Felgenhaverum apud Bremam."

[78] See [Paul Felgenhauer], *Das Geheymnus von Tempel des Herrn* (Amsterdam, 1631), 58; [Paul Felgenhauer], *Deipnōlogia* [...] *Eine Rede oder Schrifft vom Abendmahl* (Amsterdam[?], 1650), 126. Cf. Matthias Krägel, *Kurtze vnd gründliche Widerlegung der falschen Lehr und Gotteslästerung/ welche Paulus Felgenhauer in Dreyen vnterschiedlichen Tractätlein Ao 1650 in den Druck gegeben* (Bremen, 1653), 43. "Es hat mir auch einer von seinem [*sc*. Felgenhauer's] Anhang gesagt/ daß er [...] hab ein sonderbar büchlein lassen außgehen/ dessen Titul: *Speculum pœnetentiæ*, welches ich nicht gesehen/ darinnen er seinen irrthumb auch bekennet."

[79] Pierre-Olivier Léchot, *Un christianisme "sans partialité": Irénisme et méthode chez John Dury (v.1600–1680)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011).

although Felgenhauer was "willfully set to maintaine his opinion" concerning unification, he was more "in his Confidence" when discussing prophecy. Nevertheless, this confidence "hath formerly misled him very grosely w[hi]ch hee allsoe is not ashamed to confesse."[80] Given that Felgenhauer was willing to admit his shortcomings of the 1620s, other reasons must be sought for his unwillingness to mention the *Speculum* in print.

The first reason was Felgenhauer's constant persecution by authorities throughout the Holy Roman Empire, whom he was loath to provide with further ammunition for accusations of heresy. The second reason for not mentioning the *Speculum*, however, has to do with the fact that, as Felgenhauer elaborated a new and extensive theosophical world system, many of the statements made in the work, particularly concerning the action and significance of the Holy Spirit, the nature of the spirit world and the role of visions and visionaries, were superseded by opinions he expressed in later texts. It was the theosophical matter congruent with this evolving system, and not Felgehauer's fallible prophetic genesis, which was of most value to his readers.

The *Speculum*, however, would always comprise an invisible cornerstone of Felgenhauer's doctrine. Its authorship was an essential step necessary for him to cleanse his spirit, extinguish his sins and allow him to focus on other matters. Furthermore, it firmly demonstrated the folly of political prophecy and, indeed, of war itself. After writing the *Speculum* in 1625, Felgenhauer briefly retired from the public eye and spent three whole years studying medicine, chymistry, and the works of Paracelsus and Valentin Weigel. The net result of this study was an eighty page manifesto which would define his new theosophical system, issued in Magdeburg in 1628 under the title *Aurora Sapientiae* (The Dawn of Wisdom).[81] Although the features of this system would be elaborated in numerous subsequent works, none of this would have been possible had Felgenhauer not repudiated his "criminal arrogance" in the *Speculum Poenitentiae*. This important work, therefore, provides not only a privileged insight into the mind of a seventeenth-century prophet struggling to come to terms with the nature of his perceived mis-

[80] John Dury to [Francis] Varnom, 6/16 Mar 1639/40, 6/4/30a–33b (at 31b), Hartlib Papers, Sheffield University Library.

[81] [Felgenhauer], *Aurora sapientiæ* ([Magdeburg], 1628).

sion, wrestling with doubts about the veracity and truth of the experiences he has undergone, and questioning himself in the face of his calling. It is also a testament to the ingenuity of the human mind in navigating the cognitive dissonance caused by disconfirmed prophecy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VISIONS, DREAMS, AND THE DISCERNMENT OF PROPHETIC PASSIONS: SENSE AND REASON IN THE WRITINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS AND JOHN BEALE, 1640–60

R. J. SCOTT*

The Reformation, as Euan Cameron shows at the outset of this volume, shattered the medieval consensus on the nature of angelic beings and visions of the divine. By the seventeenth century, Christian attitudes toward supernatural visions and dreams had become as diverse as the increasingly eclectic array of metaphysical theories on offer. As phenomena often thought to cross the divide between the natural and the supernatural—and thus a potential source of esoteric religious or philosophical knowledge—dreams and visions were implicated in the many epistemological controversies of the period. An examination of the opinions of theologians and philosophers on the subject of prophecy demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling the religious experience of individuals with doctrinal authority in an era when anti-formalist ideologies became more prominent. In England in the 1640s and 1650s, a growing interest in the capacity of individuals to receive inspiration through visions and dreams is visible in both popular and intellectual contexts. A focus on the integrity of man's external and interior senses contributed to a trend toward subsuming vision and dreams into a single experiential category. For sceptics, calling false visions and figments a kind of "waking dream" served the purpose of casting the value of "visions" into doubt. Discourses on valid prophecies, meanwhile, framed both visions and dreams within the context of "abstraction"—a term that described the mind's withdrawal from the stream of data furnished by the outward, sensory organs and its absorption

* The author would like to thank Clare Copeland, Jan Machielsen, and Gary Rivett for their helpful comments on this chapter; and Thomas Leng for help with additional references and research on John Beale and the Hartlib Papers.

instead by local motions in the imagination, impressed or orchestrated by supernatural agents.

Scholars have often seen popular beliefs about dreams and their relationship to religious practice as static derivatives of medieval and Renaissance tradition; the legacy of Galenic medicine and classical fatalism. In this context, the only innovative use of dreams was their role in expressing a sceptical paradox for Cartesians who sought to re-define the authority of the senses in knowledge-making.[1] Caroline Rupprecht points to how the stock of inspired dreams was tarnished by the new rhetoric of medical pathology which aligned them with mental infirmity.[2] Later, the status of the dream was retrenched by empiricists like Hobbes (1588–1679), Locke (1632–1704), and Hume (1711–76) as an anomaly in the normalizing discourse between sense and reason, which in the words of Mary Campbell, "doomed it to the epistemological sidelines of an era obsessed with rhetorical housecleaning in the name of scientific 'truth.'"[3] The old status quo in which dreams and visions were inti-

[1] See Peter Holland, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Renaissance," in *Reading Dreams*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 125–46. On the role of classical culture and fatalism in Protestant apocalyptical movements see Robin Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 19–32, 71–97.

[2] Carol Schreier Rupprecht, "Divinity, Insanity, Creativity: A Renaissance Contribution to the History and Theory of Dream/Text(s)," in *The Dream and the Text: Essays on Literature and Language*, ed. Carol Schreir Rupprecht (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 112–32.

[3] Mary Blaine Campbell, "Dreaming, Motion, Meaning: Oneiric Transport in Seventeenth-Century Europe," in *Reading the Early Modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night*, ed. Katharine Hodgkin, Michelle O'Callaghan, and Susan Wiseman (New York: Routledge, 2008), 15–30. The quotation is taken from "Dreaming Motion, Meaning: Oneiric Transport in Early Modern Europe," Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/en/research/projects/dreamingMotionMeaning. For the later rise of empiricist attitudes to dreams, see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding: In Four Books* (London, 1690), 39–44. Locke's discussion of dreams and their relations to consciousness are discussed by Michael Ayers, *Locke: Epistemology and Ontology* (London: Routledge, 1993), 254–259; Christopher Foxe, *Locke and the Scriblerians: Identity and Consciousness in Early-Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Jessica Carter, "Sleep and Dreams in Early Modern England" (PhD dissertation, Imperial College London, 2008), 121–24, 290–99. Joad Raymond points out that Locke dismissed the philosophical use of angels because they were inaccessible to enquiry. This characterizes his approach to claims about abilities of the "abstracted" soul in dreams as well. See Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 11–12.

mately linked to communication with and discernment of demonic and divine spirits, is said to have fallen by the wayside in the pursuit of a more "rational" view of nature.

While the later seventeenth century was certainly characterised by new and vocal forms of scepticism, the status and importance of dreams in the wider discourse should also take into account counter-narratives close to the English intellectual mainstream. Religious and scientific beliefs about visions and dreams must be framed as part of the long seventeenth-century epistemological crisis and the emergence of alternative scientific paradigms which supplanted medieval Thomism.[4] The importance of visions and their links to divine spirits was central to the spirituality and mysticism of the radical mid-seventeenth century religious sects. Visions and dreams remained relevant in popular culture, to nonconformists (as the work of Nigel Smith and Alexandra Walsham has demonstrated), and to Anglican opponents of mechanical philosophy in the latter third of the century.[5] Far from standing simply as ossified statements of a dying philosophical method, belief in the supernatural origins of many dreams continued to play a role in defending the theory that supernatural truths could be accommodated by the material senses.

This was especially true for those who placed Platonic philosophy at the core of an alternative metaphysics. They sought to revitalise the ailing Aristotelian paradigm and avoid the unpalatable aspects of new materialist and mechanical philosophies. Some of these thinkers were religious conservatives who adapted the scholastic

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[4] For an overview of the changing intellectual landscape over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see Stephen Menn, "The Intellectual Setting," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 33–86; Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003); and, Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), esp. 230–317.

[5] See Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640–1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). References to the spiritual significance of dreams continued to appear in the work of the Royal Society, albeit outside of any formal theoretical context. See Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528, here 518, and Alexandra Walsham, "Invisible Helpers: Angelic Intervention in Post-Reformation England," *Past and Present* 208 (2010): 77–130, here 94, 106, 125–26; and, Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (New York: Oxford UP, 2010), 283.

method of searching for a synthesis between Plato, Aristotle, and the standard canon of Christian authors. Others embraced the magical and theosophical perspectives offered by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535), Paracelsus (1493–1541) and Jacob Boehme (1575–1624). In England, in the decades of the radical revolution, both perspectives were employed amid fresh attempts to frame the origins and the authority of supernatural inspiration. They provided a point of discourse in the ongoing search for a new philosophical and theological direction for Christianity, and the ongoing redefinition of the relationship between metaphysical beliefs and the contours of the doctrine of superstition. As such, the discourse of dreams and visions confronted problems and advanced ideas that continued to inform thinking on the subject after 1660.

This chapter seeks to examine different approaches to the problematic relationship between sense and reason in states of ecstasy or "enthusiasm" in 1640s and 1650s England. It looks in particular at the work of two Cambridge Platonists: John Smith (1618–52) and his *Select Discourses* (1660), and Henry More (1614–87) and his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656). The Platonists offered a re-appraisal of traditional scholastic theories, which established the authority of ecstatic vision using criteria based on the potency and coherence of sensory impressions, the integrity of the intellectual faculties, and a mixture of hermeneutical and contextual interpretations.

I then turn to consider a very different perspective, that of the Reverend John Beale (1608–83). Beale was a philosopher, polymath, and respected member of the Hartlib Circle—a diverse network of writers and virtuosi dedicated to the pursuit and sharing of pragmatic intellectual knowledge across international boundaries. In distinction to the approach of the Platonists, Beale applied a Baconian methodology to build his perception of nature. The contrasting ways in which the Platonists and Beale approached the subject of enthusiasm and dreams highlight the different ways in which post-scholastic thinkers interpreted the relationship between inspiration, philosophical methodology, and religious authority in the context of the epistemological crisis of the period. Beale's views are explored through his reaction to the work of More and of Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) in letters to Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600–1662) and

other important documents among the Hartlib Papers at Sheffield University.[6]

1. *Sense, Reason, and Revelation in Debate*

Central to the search for a new philosophical understanding of dreams was the question of how the authority of the senses, of reason, and of revelation—as the principal sources of knowledge in the Christian intellectual synthesis—should be ordered. How could one trust the evidence of the senses, and particularly the eyes, in the case of visionary experiences like those of trances and dreams? Given the centrality of revelation to the Christian faith, any comprehensive metaphysics had to theorize conditions under which the validity of visionary experiences could be affirmed. However, the need to develop an authoritative position on when apparent cases of divine inspiration were *not* to be trusted was just as important. The classical medical and philosophical culture on which theologians drew to make these distinctions offered a wide range of justifications for credulity or scepticism in the face of prophetic and inspired claims, and an equally wide range of opinions about the circumstances and conditions under which prophecy was possible.

Questions concerning the authority of revealed knowledge formed part of the larger discourse about the practice of knowledge-making. The seventeenth century is said to have seen

[6] The principal sources for Beale's writings are the Evelyn papers at Christ Church, Oxford), the British Library, and, especially, the Hartlib Papers at the University of Sheffield. All material has been drawn from *The Hartlib Papers: A Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600–1660) Held in Sheffield University Library,* 2nd ed. (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2002) [henceforth, *HP*], available on CD-ROM. The resource also contains material not in Sheffield. Editorial conventions for this electronic edition of the Hartlib Papers include listing citations by bundle/section/(subsection)/first leaf–last leaf, and leaf sides (a/b). Quoted texts are identified by editorial header. Transcript marks and notations have been omitted for ease of reading, except where words may have been unclear, and texts are quoted in roman rather than italic. The principal documents referred to in this chapter are: John Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 25/5, 1–12, *HP*; John Beale to Hartlib[?], undated, 62/7, 1–3, *HP*; John Beale to John Worthington, 12 June 1658 (copy in scribal hand), The James Marshal and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, also in *HP*; and John Beale, "Treatise on the Art of Interpreting Dreams" (Undated), 25/19, 1–28, *HP*.

the rise of a powerful empiricist discourse that emphasized the particulars of vision as a corrective to the failings of speculative reason. The Baconian philosophy, in particular, promoted sensory experience within a new scientific method, which sought to expand knowledge through measuring and cataloguing natural phenomena rather than reducing them to components in a pre-given system or method of knowledge. Arguments for privileging the pragmatic use of the senses were also connected to an increased emphasis on practical morality (as opposed to dogma) as the guiding principle of religious, political, and intellectual life.[7]

However, as Stuart Clark has demonstrated, the same period that saw the rise of empiricism also witnessed profound anxiety about the unreliability of the visual senses, and their openness to damage, abuse, trickery, and direct subversion by spiritual beings.[8] The integrity of all the senses—outward and inward—was thrown into confusion by demonology and medical pathologies of disorder. It was claimed that malevolent spirits possessed the requisite power over the senses to compromise utterly the mind's ability to discern between divine miracles, preternatural magic, and artificial "illusions." Natural diseases and disorders increased the confusion, since imbalances in the internal energies and substances of the body could disable the discerning powers of the intellect and create hallucinations that were as convincing as reality. Michael Heyd has highlighted the central importance played by the discourse of naturalistic medicine in defining the legitimacy of contemporary prophets from England's mid-century forward.[9] By applying medical diagnosis to the realm of supernatural experience as a tool of scepticism, these critiques were part of a trend toward minimising the discovery of supernatural potential within the natural realm. In

[7] See Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), 336–43; Alan Salter, "Early Modern Empiricism and the Discourse of the Senses," and Richard Yeo, "Memory and Empirical Information: Samuel Hartlib, John Beale and Robert Boyle," in *The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge: Embodied Empiricism in Early Modern Science*, ed. Charles Wolfe and Ofer Gal (New York: Springer, 2010), 59–74, 185–210; and Scott, *England's Troubles*, 247–289.

[8] Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

[9] Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995).

most of the writing which constituted these discourses of anxiety, the role of the intellect in stabilising and affirming the truthful nature of experience was key. The confirming power of reason came especially to the fore in the question of arbitrating between the truth and falsity of theological visions.[10]

Richard Popkin has identified both the Cambridge Platonists and the constellation of thinkers that surrounded Hartlib as part of a "third force" in seventeenth-century philosophy.[11] He classified them as thinkers who, in response the sceptical challenge of the period, sought a middle way between the radical responses of the Cartesians and the empiricists. According to Popkin's definition of the "third force," their shared outlook was grounded in apocalyptical and millennial thinking, a commitment to religious toleration, the promotion of practical ethical concerns over factional dogma, and opposition to the spread of atheism that radical materialist philosophy was perceived to embody. These concerns were united and vitally motivated by a powerful Reformation ideology that predicted the victory of Protestantism and the immediacy of the end times. Both groups were connected by acquaintance and correspondence. Hartlib, for instance, was instrumental in facilitating the early contact between Henry More and Descartes (1596–1650), while John Worthington (1618–71), a member of the Cambridge fellows, acted as executor of the papers of both John Smith and Samuel Hartlib, and also corresponded with John Beale.[12]

In many ways, however, the writings of Smith, More, and Beale on prophecy emphasize the large variance in the temper of their ideas about the basis of philosophical authority. This is especially true for their individual notions about the proper relationship between sense and reason. The Cambridge scholars owed to the scholastic tradition many of the doctrines which they employed to

[10] See Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*.

[11] Richard Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 90–119. Popkin's account focuses chiefly on John Smith, Benjamin Whichcote (1609–83), Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth (1617–88) as representatives of the Platonist school. His analysis of the international thinkers connected by Samuel Hartlib focuses primarily on John Dury (1596–1680) and Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670).

[12] See Popkin, *The Third Force,* 90–119. Familiarity with and respect for the writings of Joseph Mede and William Twisse were common to most of these figures. For further background on the context of the Hartlib Circle and its activities, see Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 1–88.

square classical thought with traditional elements of Christian belief. Their brand of Christian Platonism allowed them to express confidently their "logical" definitions for distinguishing genuine from false ecstatic experiences.[13] In contrast, the Hartlib circle adopted the Baconian principle that the "particulars" of testimony and experience should not be sacrificed prematurely to grand models and universal schemata.[14] Robert Boyle (1627–91), another associate of Hartlib and Beale, championed the ideal of the "Christian *virtuoso*" as one who privileged the evidence of "experience" over the speculative approaches of other philosophers. He defined "experience" as

> the knowledge we have of any matter of Fact, which, without owing to Ratiocination, either we acquire by the Immediate tes[t]imony of our Own Senses and other faculties, or accrews to us by the Communicated Testimony of Others.[15]

John Beale's work on the value and legitimacy of prophecy was conducted from these very premises and aimed to create a Baconian form of enquiry that departed from prescriptive scholastic norms. His commitment to the Baconian paradigm was also directly motivated by strong spiritual convictions. In contrast to the Platonist exercise of imposing "logical" definitions on prophecy and prophets, Beale believed that standards of discernment, based on human concepts of pathology and orthodox standards of "rational" religious ethics, were antithetical to the experimental method and to

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[13] For introductory background on the context of the Cambridge Platonists, see Sarah Hutton, "The Cambridge Platonists," in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 308–18 and Mark Goldie, "Cambridge Platonists (act. 1630s–1680s)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–) [henceforth, *DNB*], http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94274, as well the related entries on John Smith and Henry More. On the Hartlib Circle, see Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002) and Mark Greengrass, "Hartlib, Samuel (ca. 1600–1662)," *DNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12500. Jan Wojcik has written extensively on the difference in the attitudes of Robert Boyle (another close associate of Hartlib) and the Cambridge latitudinarians towards the relationship between human reason and divinity. See Jan Wojcik, *Robert Boyle and the Limits of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).

[14] Yeo, "Memory and Empirical Information," 185–210.

[15] Robert Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso [. . .] The First Part* (London, 1690), 54, quoted in Yeo, "Memory and Empirical Information," 186. For more information on Robert Boyle's understanding of the relationship between sense and reason, see Wojcik, *Robert Boyle*.

God's inscrutable providence. Throughout his correspondence with Hartlib and his writings on prophecy, Beale made repeated references to his own experiences of prognostic dreams and ecstatic inspiration. These included encounters with supernatural beings during his years at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, and a pivotal incident at Backbury Hill, a location in Herefordshire, which has been documented in an article by Michael Leslie.[16]

2. *John Smith (1618–52) and the* Select Discourses

John Smith's treatises on the prophetic nature of vision were an early sign of the shift within the metaphysical debate on the discernment of spirits and the grounds of knowledge. Smith's work presented many of the core aspects of what has come to be known as Cambridge Platonism, whose thinkers emphasized individual spirituality over dogmatic religious creeds, arguing that Christ's message placed practical works of virtue before abstract intellectual knowledge. Despite this, Smith still worked primarily from the perspective of speculative rational philosophy. The *Select Discourses*, which collected his work on these principles, were edited and published by Worthington in 1660, following Smith's premature death in 1652. His treatise "On Prophecy" demonstrated the importance attached to defining ecstatic states correctly against those of counterfeit enthusiasts. It dealt with the question of how individuals could discern divine visions, as well as how the authority of prophets was publically recognized. [17]

Theories of prophetic ecstasy and rapture had to encompass the divine power to interrupt and subvert mundane experience, while claiming to distinguish them from the patterns of natural and demonic corruption. Pastoral literature no longer sanctioned dreams and prophecies as equal authorities to Scripture and the ecumenical

[16] For more biographical detail on John Beale, see Michael Leslie, "The Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale," in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1992). On Backbury Hill see ibid., 162–166, and John Beale to Hartlib, 15 November, 1659, 62/25/1–4, *HP*. See also Patrick Woodland, "Beale, John (bap. 1608, d. 1683)," *DNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1802.

[17] John Smith, *The Select Discourses*, ed. John Worthington (London, 1660). See also Sarah Hutton, "Smith, John (1618–1652)," *DNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25838.

ministry of the Church, and many orthodox scholars were suspicious or dismissive of the contemporary role of prophecy. Nevertheless, the Scriptural record made it impossible to deny that visionary experience lay at the roots of the Christian religion. Rational theologians were therefore compelled to treat these events as factual and furnish them with scientific justifications.[18] Scholastic theology, as represented by the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, drew upon patristic and Arabic sources to achieve a synthesis between Aristotelian cognitive theories, Platonic inspiration, and Christian doctrine. As a Protestant theologian, John Smith also respected patristic literature, but he drew much more extensively upon the Neoplatonic scholarship of the Jewish philosopher Maimonides and other rabbinic authors.[19] Smith's work is instructive for differentiating the project of Cambridge Platonism from its scholastic forebears: it emphasized the value of the senses and of experience in judging the origins of "prophetical" visions and dreams to a much greater degree. It also stands, as we shall see, in contrast to the later perspective of Henry More's *Enthusiasmu*s, where doubts about the certainty of the relationship between sense and reason critically undercut this formula.

Both Aquinas and Smith used a number of overlapping hierarchies to describe the different states and degrees of visionary inspiration. They defined these special states as advanced kinds of "abstractions"—separations between the material senses of the body and the immaterial senses of the soul. When Aquinas and Smith analysed the value and significance of genuine visions, they did so in three ways. First, they classified visions according to the way in which the cognitive faculties received and interpreted them

[18] For examples of sermons, pastoral and theological literature touching upon the subject of dreams see William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1610), 92–104; Richard Greenham, *The Workes of the Reuerend and Faithfull Seruant of Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham* (London, 1612), 229; Robert Sanderson, *Fourteen Sermons Heretofore Preached* (London, 1657), 18; Thomas Manton, *One Hundred and Ninety Sermons on the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm* (London, 1681), 650.

[19] The principal text upon which Smith's *Discourses* drew was Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. Aquinas shows familiarity with this text, but he looks primarily to Augustine, Jerome, and Pseudo-Dionysius for his theory of prophecy, and Neoplatonic influences on his work come primarily through this route. Other Jewish scholars cited by John Smith included Bahyah Ibn Bachya (ca.1000–1050), Abraham bar Hiyya [Chija] (1070–1136), Judah Helevi (ca. 1075–1141), Joseph Albo (ca. 1380–1444), and Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508), among others.

(i.e., the method of delivery); second, according to the merits of these images as epistemological "objects" of sense, and as signifiers for allegorical subjects (their quality and meaning); and finally, they considered the physical, psychological, and moral effects of the prophetic force on the recipient (their psychosomatic impact).[20]

The first of these criteria, the medium of the vision, was often taken to define the status of a prophetic "event." It used the three-tier hierarchy of being and sense described by Aristotle and applied by Augustine and Isidore of Seville to describe an order of supernatural perception. This hierarchy had a wide applicability in the epistemological debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, in which it was used to describe encounters with immaterial spirits.[21] According to this order, spirits could "manifest" themselves to the bodily senses, the internal sense of the imagination, or the pure spiritual intellect of the soul.[22] The degrees of this hierarchy also had specific meanings in the context of prophecy and revelation. They defined one of the crucial differences between the power of demonic and divine agents which lay in the ability to manipulate or "rouse" the mental faculties: only divine visions could truly stimulate the intellect in the perception of spiritual truth.

In the *Summa theologica*, divine inspiration was distinguished by two principles. The first was that the angels who acted as its intermediaries were miraculously empowered to impress original impressions (the *specie*) into the mind, which lay beyond the natural powers of spirits. The second was that God illuminated and strengthened the understanding of the intellect, allowing prophets

[20] Apologies must be begged for the limitations of the present work, in which Aquinas is taken for comparison with the work of the Cambridge Platonists as a pre-eminent authority amongst the medieval scholastics on prophecy. Further research is required to establish the outlines of the theory of prophecy in representative works of the Protestant scholastic community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The key questions for the subject of natural dreams and supernatural prophecies are: Aquinas, *Summa theologica* I q. 12, art. 1–13 (esp. art 11); q. 84, art. 1–8; q. 86, art. 1–4; q. 111, art. 1–4; and II q. 171–175. For background on the cognitive mechanisms involved in the processes of vision and dreaming see Gary Hatfield, "The Cognitive Faculties," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Garber and Ayers, 2:953–1002; Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 9–77, 300–28; Michael Ayers, *Locke*, 19–28 gives an account of the ontological relationship between objects of thought and the intellectual operations of the mind in the scholastic and "new" mechanical philosophies.

[21] Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 204–5.

[22] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 174, art.1; Smith, *Select Discourses*, 178–81.

to discern spiritual truth.[23] Smith similarly spoke about how the "Imagination and Mind of the Prophet" was "ravish'd from it self, and was made subject wholy to some Agent intellect informing it and shining upon it."[24]

Different "degrees" of prophecy were distinguished according to the effects wrought by divine agents on the faculties of the senses, the passions, the imagination and the intellect. This hierarchy focused on the transmission of knowledge via visionary phenomena, but lower and higher forms of inspiration also existed. Lower degrees of prophecy affected the lower passions with certain spiritual instincts and intuitions. Higher inspiration took the form of the intellectual vision, a privileged category of communication in which divine truths were delivered in their naked essence without mediation of the senses or the imagination.[25] This form notwithstanding, Aquinas stated that the various degrees of prophecy were "properly distinguished according to imaginary vision," where divine inspiration presented imaginative signs and symbols whose significance could only be deciphered by a divinely inspired intellect.[26] Smith also affirmed that "in all proper Prophesie is both the Rational and Imaginative power."[27] The primacy of imaginative vision, it was often said, was confirmed because it was one of God's covenanted means of communication with the priesthood of the Old Testament.

The second set of criteria used by Aquinas and Smith—the epistemological force of visionary objects and the clarity of their allegorical subjects—was the chief means by which a prophet could discern whether his vision was divine. The sensory elements of vision provided the means for making quantifiable distinctions between bodily hallucinations and supernatural visions, between demonic and divine dreams, and between prophetic dreams and those that were merely "true" or "hagiographical."

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[23] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 173, art. 2.

[24] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 182. Smith speaks here of agent intellects as separate spiritual essences, rather than Aristotle's "active intellect," sometimes argued, especially by Arabic authors, to be a higher celestial intelligence in which the soul participated.

[25] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 178–85, 261–67. Jewish scholars attributed it solely to Moses and called it the *gradus mosaicus.* See also Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 173, art. 2; q. 174, art. 2–5.

[26] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 174, art. 3.

[27] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 174, art. 3; Smith, *Select Discourses*, 178.

In both Jewish and scholastic writings, "prophetic" was a term which could either be expanded to include all forms of divine inspiration, discernment, or understanding; or contracted to refer specifically to knowledge beyond the course of nature. Different kinds of imaginative visions could be distinguished according to their content or what was denoted by their "objects" (i.e., the original idea from which the vision's images, *idola*, *simulacra*, or *species* emanated). In the second, narrower definition of prophecy, the "objects of knowledge" were supernatural and lay outside of the natural world —they pertained to the unknowable directions of God's providence, men's free will, and the nature of divine law. This differentiated them from inspirations which revealed remote but merely natural "objects"—distant events, natural mutations, and comprehensible sciences.[28] Smith noted that the Judaic authors made a distinction between prophetic dreams and those which were merely "true dreams" (*vera somnia*), of an "admonitory" or "instructing" nature. They fell into the aforementioned forms of lower inspiration, sometimes denoted as "hagiographical", and prophetic only in the wider sense of the word.[29]

The main differences between the Thomist account and Smith's Platonist account emerged in this category. Aquinas suggested that the "expressive power" of the vision was derived principally from the coherence and clarity of its metaphorical and allegorical subjects, the internal logic of the visionary narrative, while Smith followed his Neoplatonic sources in suggesting that expressive power lay rather in the intrinsic *force* of the vision, indicated by the potency of its motions in the prophet's faculties. While both scholars placed ultimate importance on the presence of the rational intellect as the defining attribute of prophetic vision, Smith gave greater weight to this second set of criteria as a principle by which the prophet could discern a vision's supernatural origins.

For the scholastic, therefore, reading the content of the vision was primarily an exercise in hermeneutics. When a prophet saw things significative of truth, signs were said to be "the more excellent according as the signs are more expressive" of their exegetical and analogical subjects—as in the case of "the seven full ears of corn" (which signified "seven years of plenty" to Joseph in Genesis

[28] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 174, art. 4
[29] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 180–81, 183–85.

41).[30] By contrast, Smith emphasized that it was "the strength of its impression and the forcibleness of its operation" which enabled the prophet to discern a "Prophetical dream."[31] God's voices or commands were accompanied by sensual signs like "Thunder and Earthquake or some great Clashing."[32] This, it was claimed, was the sensory evidence of the spiritual illumination that "entred upon the Mind as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces."[33] In other instances the impressions were gentler. It was not the inherent violence of the impressions but the spiritual source which made these sensory experiences so vivid, imparting "a strong evidence of their Original along with them, whereby they might be able to distinguish them both from any hallucination."[34] The difference between the visionary objects of natural and supernatural dreams was that the former were only decayed echoes drawn from human memory, whereas the latter were imbued with "vigour and liveliness" by their divine agent.[35] Discernment by the epistemological force of visionary objects suggested that divine visions were characterised by hyper-vivid sensuality. The potency of these visions, even in dreams, was implicitly equal or superior to perceptions experienced in waking reality.

The critical corollary of Smith's theory was that if visions and dreams could be self-evidently divine in their origins, then natural and demonic dreams were self-evidently false. Smith claimed that although true prophecy and false enthusiasm both seemed to require "the Imaginative facultie to be vigorous and potent," the experience of the pseudo-prophet was betrayed by impotence in the intellect, and by weak visions in which the spirit "only flutters below upon the more terrene parts of mans Soul, his Passions and Phansie."[36]

> For whensoever the Phantasms come to be disordered and to be presented tumultuously to the Soul, as it is either in a μαναί Furie, or in Melancholy, (both which Kinds of alienation are commonly observed by Physicians) or else by the Energy of this Spirit of Divination, the

[30] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II q. 174, art. 4.
[31] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 203–9, here 208.
[32] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 204.
[33] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 207.
[34] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 206.
[35] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 208–9.
[36] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 190–91; 202–3.

> Mind can pass no true Judgment upon them; but its light and influence becomes eclipsed.[37]

The idea of the natural "fury" as an "alienation" of the soul, rather than "abstraction" of the soul from the body defined the third, final criterion for discerning the difference between prophets and antiprophets: theologians consistently claimed that fantasies caused by physical disorders were betrayed by physical symptoms. Controversy about the scientific value of a naturally induced "Spirit of Divination" abounded, but theologians commonly saw them as scientifically uncertain and morally bankrupt. They were betrayed by the immoral temper of the individual's imagination and the meaning of his words. Contrary to the "evidences and energies" of the divine dream, the symbolic matter of false prophecies tended "to nourish immorality and prophaneness," and in their sensuous quality they were "more dilute and languid." Since this difference had tangible sensory and spiritual effects, Smith charged that "the false might, if they would have laid aside their own fond self-conceit, have known as easilie that God sent them not."[38]

3. *The Challenges of Materialism and the Discernment of Prophets*

The spread of religious factionalism and the rise of sectarian anxiety in the 1640s and 1650s were accompanied by the multiplication of groups espousing illuminist philosophies and a growing chorus of popular prophetic voices. Naturally, in this context, not everyone felt they could afford as confident a position on the mechanics of discerning prophecy as Smith presented. Influential works of naturalistic scepticism radically reappraised both the degree to which the soul was capable of becoming abstracted from the body and the conditions under which this could occur. At the extreme end of the spectrum, Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) totally repudiated the idea of an abstract spiritual world and argued that all dreams and prophetic passions must be explained by material causes.[39]

Others did not seek to abolish the divide between body and spirit,

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[37] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 197.

[38] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 207.

[39] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), 4–8. On the Anglican reaction to Hobbes, see Laura Sangha's chapter below, 255–77.

but nevertheless argued that expectations concerning their relationship should be revised significantly. Meric Casaubon, a staunch royalist, cleric, and humanist scholar who was deprived of his benefices in 1643–44, argued that claims to supernatural abstraction were almost always forms of mental alienation, entirely the result of natural causes. Another associate of the Cambridge Platonists, Henry More, advanced an even more uncompromising diagnosis of enthusiasm as a melancholic disorder in his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656). In this way a medical argument which had previously only supported more traditional scholastic discourse on false enthusiasm was now put forward as the defining pathology of the enthusiast: it was melancholy rather than the devil that was said to have "put on the garments of an Angel of light."[40]

Enthusiasmus Triumpathus shows how naturalist scepticism could present problems for the Platonist commitment to revelation, forcing critical scrutiny of the issue from a member of its own school. Like Casaubon, More pushed the point that vivid dreams and visions could be induced in the body by natural means, whether deliberately or accidentally. Claims that unbalanced and unclean passions were responsible for violent disorders in the imagination were common in certain medical traditions. These disorders actively disrupted the use of reason. More's argument challenged those who took any "great and vehement" force in nature or "strong and impetuous motion" of the mind as evidence of supernatural causation.[41] He was inclined not merely to view violent and grand imaginations as evidence of mental disturbance but also to suggest that the impression left by false dreams on the soul was not "weak" and "languid," as Smith had suggested, but "at least as strong and vigorous as it is at any time in beholding things awake."[42] The enthusiastic melancholist was apt to feel "a storm of devotion or zeal come upon him like a mighty wind, his heart being full of affection, his head pregnant with clear and sensible representations."[43] More

[40] Meric Casaubon, *A Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme* (London, 1654); Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (London, 1656). For discussion and analysis of these works and their role in the medicalising discourse of enthusiasm see Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable*, 44–71, 72–108, 191–210. More quoted on melancholy from *Enthusiasmus*, 18.

[41] More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 15–16.

[42] More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 27.

[43] More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 16.

further claimed that a soul could sometimes be made "fatally and necessarily" prisoner to these phantasms "without any will or consent of her [i.e., the soul's] own." Here, More followed the opinion of physicians that melancholics often lived out their dreams in their waking life. The treatise was hence a polemical refutation of false prophecy rather than a model for legitimate prophecy.

More's scepticism complicated some of Smith's claims about the epistemological relationship between the potency of impressions and the integrity of their origins, including his intimation that divine power was tangible, accessible, and knowable to the judgment of the internal senses. Having cast the ability to self-validate prophetic experiences into extreme doubt, More specified rigorous criteria for the public validation of a prophet's spiritual character as the basis for his authority. They echoed arguments used by Aquinas, by Smith's Jewish authors, and by continental critics of enthusiasm in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[44] These prescriptions tended to highlight some of the contradictions inherent in assimilating contrasting aspects of Christian tradition and pagan philosophy.

As we have seen, both genuine and false ecstasy were theorised as a physical process that had a profound impact on the body. Biblical descriptions of the symptoms surrounding prophecy often appeared to be very similar to those which were criticised in "false" and pagan prophets. Smith, Casaubon, and More all supported their claims that false enthusiasts were victims of mental disturbance by appealing to outward mannerisms, physical symptoms, and disordered patterns of speech. Smith pointed toward descriptions of the Delphic oracle, "uttering her Oracles in a strange disguise with many Antick gestures, her hair torn, and foaming at her Mouth."[45] More likened the trances of enthusiasts to fits of apoplexy or epilepsy, which disrupted the connections between mind and body more completely than in natural sleep. It was this profound physical alienation which allowed their imaginations and dreams to become so powerful that they were mistaken for true visions.[46]

More's criticisms presupposed the natural origins of these furies and skirted around the fact that the prophetic ecstasies reported in Scripture were themselves accompanied by profound and dramatic

[44] Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable*, 11–43.
[45] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 197.
[46] More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, 25–28.

mental and physical perturbations. Smith acknowledged that the body of the prophet was subject to "Panick fears, Consternations and Affrightments and Tremblings, which frequently seized upon them together with the Prophetical influx."[47] For Smith, just as the rapture of a prophet was more violent than the fantasy of an enthusiast, so too the physical perturbations were theoretically greater: referring to Daniel 10:8, such disturbances were said to have turned the prophet's "comeliness" into "corruption" and he was said to have "retained no strength."[48] Whilst More likened the effects of an overwrought imagination to drunkenness, Smith quoted Jeremiah 23:9 in the *Discourses*: "because of the Prophetical influx residing upon me, my bones are all rotten, and I am like a drunken man that neither sees nor hears."[49]

The rational theology practised by More and Casaubon did provide a spiritual mechanics of inspiration, but entwining the divine so closely with the natural provided no reliable basis for parsing the origins of preternatural motions. While Smith had maintained the idea that scales of degree and quality were reliable and applicable, More suggested that the danger of enthusiasm lay precisely in the fact that the natural and supernatural were indistinguishable. The same uncertainties applied when critics tried to apply rational principles of discernment to the manner, style, and content of prophetic speeches. Critics of enthusiasts claimed that the speeches of false prophets were irrational and came only from the imagination. Smith labelled the speech of false oracles and ancient poets of divinity as deranged. Jerome had claimed that God's prophets did *not* "speak they knew not what" nor did they prove themselves "when they went about to instruct others, ignorant of what they said themselves", in contrast to the babbling heretics of his own day.[50] Yet Smith claimed it as a virtue that Scripture, and the prophecy it contained, could not be reduced to the forms and precepts of human reason on the basis that it was limited and flawed. He claimed false prophecies were betrayed by a poetic structure that was too

[47] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 199.

[48] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 200.

[49] Smith quotes this interpretation of the verse from Isaac Abrabanel, as a gloss on the King James Version: "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets, all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man (and like a man whom wine hath ouer-come) because of the Lord, and because of the words of his Holinesse."

[50] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 198.

logical and consistent, revealing them to be human artifices.[51]

If the divine appeared irrational by its ultimate sublimity, the corrupt was often artful in its sophistry. To add to the difficulty, attempts to validate the rationality of divinely inspired speech could only be justified in the context of a confident and robust intellectual culture. These terms for validating prophetic speech—that it was "rational" and not "sophistic"—tended to be abstract rather than particular in their criticism, and stood to assert a claim for the authority of one's own philosophical position. Both Smith and More gave varied criteria for validating the words of prophets as public religious authorities. Smith claimed first, that they should be credited by *other* recognised prophets; second, that they be confirmed by attendant miracles; and third, that they stand up to the demands of rational morality.[52] More demanded a public display of impeccable piety, impeccable orthodoxy, and impeccable "rationality" from a "true prophet." More's view on the public nature of a prophet's morality moved beyond Smith's by relating them explicitly to a mode of life that curbed the excesses of a natural melancholic disposition. A prophet was required to observe temperance that he might curb gluttonous and sexual lusts; humility, as demonstrated by submission to intellectual and social order; and reason, consisting in sceptical training, a commitment to accepting "common notions" from experience, and making clear deductions from these.[53]

The demand that prophets be validated by trial in the public forum was comprehensible only on the assumption that a valid forum existed, one acknowledged for the integrity of its provenance, its doctrine and its critical acumen. Like the Judaic authors they read, Smith and More were invested in the ideal of a continuous and coherent tradition that linked the religious past and present. Christ's revelation was singular: prophets were now defined only in the light of a post-prophetic time. While Smith tried to bolster the historical authority of revelation through an appeal to empirical notions and practical divinity, More denied that this was a solution. More's work suggested that the historical authority of the speculative methods of philosophy, which empiricism criticised, had to be maintained. He ridiculed the alternative cosmological visions proposed by alche-

[51] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 277–78.
[52] Smith, *Select Discourses*, 266–67.
[53] More, *Enthusiasmus*, 51–55.

mists, Paracelsians, and theosophists simply by noting how outlandish their claims sounded in light of received beliefs.[54] The Neoplatonist claimed that contemporary inspirations should not reinvent the wheel or challenge the foundations of knowledge: all inspired intellectual notions should fit a pattern of "Particular Reason, or Reason in Succession, or by peece-meal."[55] The definition of "public" was also unambiguously clerical. In reconciling this view with his own commitment to Platonism, More essentially claimed that pious enthusiasts were no more than astute practitioners of religion as it was preached by ministers of the Church, their spiritual sensibilities enhanced by their melancholic disposition.[56]

Thus, while More's work functioned well as a polemical piece, which defended religious orthodoxy and church institutions and affirmed the sceptical mood of the times, its judgments seemed anything but robust to those who rejected the flaws and uncertainties of the old philosophical method. It resisted the recognition, at the heart of the Reformation, that great swathes of a supposedly universal religious knowledge had already been rejected as products of an inherent corruption. Philosophers too had grappled with the same difficulty—how to ascertain the foundations of knowledge—for as long or longer. One defence of the value of prophetic dreams and visions came from Baconian philosophy.

4. *Ecstatic Experience and the Limits of Reason*

The writings of John Beale offer a sharp contrast to the approaches of More and Smith. Beale is known mainly for his collaborative works on horticulture with members of the Royal Society and for his interest in using mnemonic characters to enhance learning and philosophical enquiry. Recently he has attracted attention for his unique and idiosyncratic views on matters of the supernatural. He combined an interest in pragmatic scientific matters with a resolute belief that mankind possessed *supernatural* capacities which could not be scrutinised with instruments or methods derived solely from *human* reason. One of the most remarkable aspects of Beale's partic-

[54] More, *Enthusiasmus*, 44–46.
[55] More, *Enthusiasmus*, 55.
[56] More, *Enthusiasmus*, 58–59.

ipation in the Hartlib group was the confidence with which he rejected traditional scholastic and theological dogma, to the extent of entertaining heterodox beliefs typically associated with occult sorcery and "demonic" superstition. These interests do not appear to have damaged his reputation amongst his confidents. On the contrary, Beale was highly esteemed by Hartlib and his peers. Astute enough to recognise that some of his views could be problematic, Beale confined his more radical ideas to personal correspondence, while exercising a certain prudence in those works eventually intended for wider distribution. In letters and manuscripts now among the Hartlib papers, he proposed that empirical evidence and close Scriptural reading should guide philosophical reflections on prophetic visions and dreams toward a re-discovery of an infallible art for their discernment and interpretation of the kind he believed had been enjoyed by the biblical Patriarchs.[57] Hartlib praised the writings he produced on prophetic dreams, sharing them with John Dury, John Pell (1611–85), and their continental ally Comenius, who wished to see them translated into Latin.[58]

Beale subscribed to an ideal of spiritual reform that encompassed the urgency for contemporary prophecy. Prophetic inspiration was not simply a matter of faith or theory: dogmatic criticisms of enthusiasm presented a challenge to his spiritual identity. Beale claimed not only to have collected testimonies concerning their validity from numerous acquaintances, but that he himself experienced numerous dreams which proved to be prophetic.

For Beale, the arbitrary nature of the distinctions drawn by More and Smith between the "frenzies" of ancient prophets and contemporary enthusiasm threw such "orthodox" methods of reasoning into doubt. In a letter to Samuel Hartlib, Beale was critical of the naturalist arguments of Casaubon and More, claiming they were incompatible with Scripture. In particular, he perceived More's insistence on reason as the arbiter of genuine Christian experience to be falling into an "athiestical" error which failed to acknowledge

[57] John Beale to Samuel Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 25/5, 1–11, *HP*; John Beale, "Treatise on the Art of Interpreting Dreams," 25/19, 1–28, *HP*.

[58] See Comenius to Hartlib[?], 14 December 1657 (English translation of Latin and German original), 7/111, 4–5, *HP*; and Hartlib to John Pell, 4 February 1658, Add. MS 4279, fol. 49, British Library, also recorded in *HP*.

the sanctity of true religious enthusiasm.[59]

Beale's critique centred around the public proofs More demanded from prophets. He contrasted these with the the biblical narrative and rejected them for placing too presumptuous a limit upon God's providential freedom. Beale maintained that discernment had to deal more precisely with discriminating conditions of "the spirite from specious complexion" than defining suitable *characters* of men. "For Men are as Men, whilst they are in this fleshly tabernacle."[60] More's insistence that a prophet should possess piety extirpating every vice was "the great & fundamentall mistake of most men & many partyes in this age." He pointed out that David was an adulterer and a murderer, that Job and Jeremiah blasphemed their parents, Jonah was a coward, and even Moses was given to "offensive" passions.[61] In other words, Beale saw an intrinsic problem with judging the nature of prophets by pathologising their physical passions: "The old prophets had sometimes the appearance of phrensyes, & wee should not bee soe rigourous against the passions of Elias, & Elisha, & Ieremy, & David." It was further

> imperfectly required [...] That Propheticall informations should bee confined to the Test of Reasone agreeable to comon [*sic*] notions or the evidence of outward sense, or else a cleere & distinct deduction from thiese.[62]

Referencing Casaubon's claim that some individuals could naturally induce bodily alienations, Beale denied that this was a cogent argument for denying the reality of contemporary prophecy. "I aske, If the Spirite of man by naturall frame can transcend the use of Organs, must prophesy submit to the Test of Organicall conduct & to reasone deduced from those pipes?"[63] If man could himself affect to transcend his own body even artificially, how could nature be a suitable instrument to measure his spiritual powers and capacities? The spirit itself "may have a far more delicate & quic perception than by the organs of sense."[64]

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[59] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 1–11. Beale refers to the author of the *Enthusiasmus* only by More's Latin pseudonym of Parresiastes.

[60] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 9–10.

[61] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 10a.

[62] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 10b.

[63] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 10b.

[64] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 11a–b.

Other "unreasonable" demands were made upon the rational certainty of prophets. For More, it was essential that the prophet had clear and certain knowledge that what he had prophesied would come to pass.[65] Beale fastened on Scriptural precedents to refute such strictures: "For prophets did not allwayes und[e]rstand their owne Prophesyes [...] And sometimes by God[']s Mercy the Event was suspended, as to Nineveh in the dayes of Ionas."[66] Thomist philosophy had accounted for such problems by making distinctions between "declarative" and "denunciative" forms of prophecy, which related differently to the complex interplay of divine providence and man's free and contingent actions.[67] These distinctions were not utilised by the Platonists, and it is not likely they would have furthered their critique of contemporary prophets. Beale, however, acknowledged that the ends of prophecy could be altered by contingency or by God's own action. "Wee are too peremptory [dogmatic] with the most High, if wee can put no value upon any secrets that are not unalterable."[68]

5. *The Evidence of Sense and Experience*

We should take care not to oversimplify Beale's position. Beale rejected a pure "natural" empiricism as much as he rejected purely speculative theology. He maintained a faith that a purely spiritual kind of experiential data existed within the natural, essential to man, and incapable of being separated out. Belief demanded faith, but the soul really did possess "eyes of the spirit" that could be trusted. While the Platonists claimed the relationship between abstract reasoning and experiential data was mutual and balancing, Beale applied a Baconian rhetoric to advance a very different view on how "sense" and "experience" should furnish evidence for spir-

[65] Beale alludes to More, *Enthusiasmus*, secs. 57, 56, in which More discusses Aristotle's theory that some prognostic dreams may be caused by the soul's reception of random natural motions upon which future events might be predicated, but certainly not known. Beale saw Aristotle's argument as evidence for an inclusive theory of the natural and the prophetic, whereas More uses it to disqualify such individuals as "true" divine prophets.

[66] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 11b.

[67] Aquinas, *Summa* II.II. q. 174, art.1. "Whether prophecy is fittingly divided into the prophecy of divine predestination, of foreknowledge, and of denunciation?"

[68] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 11b.

itual discernment in both private and public perspectives. This approach was fundamental to many within the Hartlib network of thinkers and "intelligencers"with their intellectual ambitions to create a new Christian science. However, as indicated above, Beale's convictions on this subject were not merely academic. He frequently and repeatedly cited examples where he had witnessed or personally experienced prognostic dreams: from his early life, his education at Eton and Cambridge, and his residency in Herefordshire.

In 1658, communicating details of his conversations with John Evelyn on the spiritual significance of natural landscapes, he confided to Hartlib that he had experienced a kind of ecstatic awakening during a "whole day & much of the night" spent on a "Mountanous hill" around the start of the Civil War. He referred to this place as "Backbury" hill. There the Lord revealed to him that "there were in thiese dayes such as might justly bee called Holy (yea & prophetiqve) Inspirations."[69] As a result of this incident he was "disenabled for a yeare to reade, or write" and began to study his dreams "solemnely & devoutly" and discern providential warnings in them.[70] This confession reveals the roots of Beale's beliefs and the grounds of his research into the prophetic, which he earlier averred had left him with "stupendious things to say of Dreames, Apparitions, Angelicall Admonitions & Advertisements, & Enthusiasmes."[71]

One of the two principal documents that record Beale's speculations on prophetic dreaming is a letter of May 1656. Beale claimed it was prompted by the "discourse & proposalls" of Katherine Jones, Viscountess Ranelegh, sister of Robert Boyle and patron to the activities of the Hartlib Circle.[72] Although he did not relate his experience on Backbury Hill on this occasion, he did suggest that prognostic dreams during his time at Eton and at the outset of the Civil War had left a great impression upon him:

> Sometimes by dreames my eyes were opened to see that iniquity, which otherwise I had not discerned. Before the beginning of thiese wars I left an impression among some very considerable persons, which will not bee forgotten. My selfe had very peculiar favours from

[69] John Beale to Samuel Hartlib, 28 November 1659, 60/1, 2b–3a, *HP*.
[70] Beale to Hartlib, 28 November 1659, 3a.
[71] John Beale to Samuel Hartlib[?], undated, 62/7, 1b–2a, *HP*.
[72] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 1a.

> the late King, & Archbishop Laud & others, but I had a checque [a warning] to decline it, & therein I declined my utter ruine. My friends much blamed mee, but they sawe not with my eyes.[73]

Beale wrote often of Thomas Stile, his room mate from Eton College who "never fayld by his dreames to foretell us all the greate accidences in his family" including "[t]he death of many alliances, the visits of friends."[74] This spiritual history powerfully affirmed Beale's opinion that "I might as well beleeve with the old Epicures, That the world was governd by the casuall dashes of atomes, as that 30 or 40 circumstances could agree together without the hand of God in it" and that "every sensible persone should reviewe his owne advertisements, & compare his esperiences [sic]" in the matter of dreams.[75]

For Beale, the context and contingency of the whole of human experience could not be separated from God's providential purpose, his active intervention in the natural world. The arguments of sceptics and materialists who put such events down to coincidence were as insidious as any of the enthusiastic excesses they might criticise. For Beale a new approach to understanding divine inspiration through philosophical methods promised to be one of the possible keys to the universal reformation of knowledge pursued by the Hartlib Circle.

The second record of Beale's research is an unpublished manuscript of uncertain date, entitled *A Severe Enquyry after the Patriarchicall & Propheticall Arte of Interpreting dreames.*[76] In both of these sources Beale defended the view that ancient arts of dream interpretation were known by the Old Testament prophets; that research into these arts should not be censured by fear of superstition; that such research could develop secure methods for discerning the prophetic nature of dreams; and that doing so would greatly advance the scope of human knowledge. "There may be more learnt in our reste & sleepe, & praeparations of sanctity," Beale wrote to Hartlib, "perteining to the depths of true wisedome, charitable arts, & practicall knowledge, than by any other long

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[73] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 5b.

[74] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 7a–b. The story is referenced in the *Enquyry* (see next paragraph). Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 25/19, 13a, *HP*

[75] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 4a and 5a.

[76] Recorded as Beale, "Treatise on the Art of Interpreting Dreams," 1–28.

studyes humane arts, or voluminous bookes."[77]

Beale's scholarship was visibly free from reliance on the grand apparatus of scholastic metaphysics and cognitive theory, and its careful proscriptions concerning profane and sacred ways of experiencing divinity. Instead he sought to judge dreams in the light of "Vncorrupted Antiquity" and "Constant Experience."[78] It has been remarked that Beale's educational background committed him to the authority of the classics.[79] The Baconian methods of the Hartlib associates were open to the inclusion of the "data" presented in the texts of antiquity, which they believed should be catalogued alongside the fruits of experiment and observation as part of the perennial fruits of the philosophical endeavour.[80] Beale's aspiration to "recover" antiquity led him to include a wide range of antique sources and data, combining the instincts of the Christian humanist with those of the Baconian enquirer in his investigation. He claimed to have collected wisdom "from the best & wisest in all ages downe to the reformation, & from the wisest of the reformers both in England & in other forreigne churches," an expansive list which included the Scriptures, the writings of Rabbinic Judaism, the early Church Fathers, and of Greek, Roman, Arabic, Egyptian and Indian antiquity.[81] The *Enquyry* quoted from the Neoplatonic text of Macrobius's *Commentary upon the Dream of Scipio*, the Hermetic text *Pymander*, as well as extensive passages from Virgil's *Aeneid* on ancient rites for incubating prophetic visions.[82] He showed evident respect for pagan sources as authoritative guides even in matters of religion, and this probably owed something to his regard for Virgil as a proto-Christian prophet.[83]

A significant part of the *Enquyry* was dedicated to describing the

[77] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 2b–3a.
[78] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 1a.
[79] Leslie, "Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale," 166–68.
[80] Yeo, "Memory and Empirical Information," 191.
[81] Beale to Hartlib, 28 May 1657, 12a; see also 4a.
[82] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 8b, 4–19, and 20 (reference to Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.87–99). The *Commentary* was a fifth-century Neoplatonic allegory used by early medieval scholastics as a guide to dream phenomenology. Beale's interest in incubation rituals at holy sites and using animal skins is another suggestive source for his beliefs about the importance of nature and landscape in the dynamics of ecstatic experience.
[83] See Leslie, "Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale," 166–68 for the significance of Beale's interest in Virgil.

political and moral mandate for recovering the arts of dream interpretation, and to defining—or rather re-defining—the nature of "superstition" in their regard. In his correspondence, Beale was freely optimistic about the value and promise of elevating the arts of dream interpretation, but the *Enquyry* directly tackled the question of how to navigate the dangers of superstitious practice. Despite his often heterodox metaphysical and spiritual views, Beale believed in the primacy of Scripture as revelation and conformed to the prevailing religious forms before and after the Restoration. He concluded that the counsel of dreams should never conflict with the authority of Scripture; that it should never motivate the neglect of human endeavour; never attempt to divine into the future for personal gain; nor promote familiarity, presumption, or undue security in one's relations with God.[84] Dreams were to be strictly divorced from the central articles of faith. "Wee forbid That Men should rely upon dreames to guide them unto the true religion or into the right way of worshipping God," wrote Beale.[85] Conscious of the sectarian anxieties of his day, he warned

> hee that builds up his religion upon the weake foundation of a dreame, or upon soe weake a bottome as may bee shaken by a dreame, Hee exposeth himselfe to all the Illusions of the evill spirites.[86]

Here similarities with More and Smith end. Beale also argued that many of the "superstitious" arts of the pagans had become evil only through falling into corruption. While a divinatory practice like augury may have fallen into idolatory, Beale thought it certain that "some of thiese ayery Creatures by the delicacy of their spirits are of more quicke sensasion than Man, & soe may bee of use to some kinds of Indication." This was a defence popular amongst students of magic, that superstition merely policed the division between esotericism and vulgar ignorance. He set forth obligations toward keeping proper account and regard of dreams of "credit" and "importance," which showed a divine hand in their impressions. [87] Christians should

[84] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 23–28.
[85] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 23a.
[86] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 23b.
[87] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 23–28.

> keepe [their] Spirits watchfull, & tender to receive the gentlest impression of divine directions in matters that have a greate appearance to bee of Concernement to the glory of God, the good of his holy Church, or to the public or private wellfare of any.[88]

Beale believed that observing dreams had a lawful role in the judgment and government of truly precipitous matters—those touching the future of state, church, and faith— and even pinned his hopes on them. Formal periods of prayer and fasting were required to wait upon an answer from God, received by dreams, omens, or lots. Beale's iconoclastic approach to experience and method may have helped push his scepticism of some traditional beliefs toward startling extremes. His speculations on whether the theological allegiance of spirits might be neutral or as yet undetermined were almost certainly inspired by pagan classical cosmology, of the type set forth in works of the Italian Renaissance, but most noticeably by occult philosophers and theosophists.[89] Beale even dared to suggest that the lawfulness of various forms of ritual and defensive magic, and their status as superstitious or demonic pacts, should be reassessed. In a letter to John Worthington of 1658, he professed that all of the authoritative knowledge of the "Schoolemen" on the subject of spirits and angels seemed to him

> altogether peremptory vpon humane conceipts & neglecting to take vp the inferences, which are clearely deducible from the very expressions of Scripture, which give a full accompt of great variety of different kinds & off different powers, & different qvalityes of spirits[90]

As per the *Enquyry*, Beale believed that common experience as well as Scripture contradicted theology. He related several stories concerning supernatural encounters from his own life in Cambridge and from local folklore of the North West and West Midland counties, which he clearly considered to be of superior value than scholastic dogma.

> This I received from Coll. Fenwicks sister the wife of Mr Baker of Oswastree in Shropshire (a religious & discreete Lady) now living. She told mee Her Father (a Iustice in Chests: or Lancash:) was a severe prosecutor of Witches; returning home in the darke, a hand smote his

[88] Beale, "Interpreting Dreams," 28a.

[89] Armando Maggi, *In the Company of Demons* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 66–70; and Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, 125-161.

[90] John Beale to John Worthington, 12 June 1658, 3b, *HP*.

> horse on the buttoc a loud stroke. The horse in disorder had allmost dismounted him. Hee thought his man by some chance had done it. But a second blow made his horse goe soe lame & feeble, that with difficulty hee recoverd to his home, & on the next day his horse beeing dead was flaid, & the full shape of a hand (in a blacke marke) visible vpon the buttoc. Another horse falling sick, Hee hastens presently to a woeman who was famed to bee a White Witch, that is, one that does not curse, but alwayes blesse & heale. With threatnings Hee commands her to discover what ailed his horse. Nothing, said the woeman, but indeed Master a hard Word is spoken & a good Word will mend all againe. God blesse the beast, Your horse will bee well againe. When hee returned home hee found the horse well againe, & said to bee sudainely recovered at the very same time. This power of blessing & healing which was noted & found to bee in [Balaam?], whose curses had also a dangerous effect deserves to bee better handled.[91]

Such stories caused Beale to question the vilification of "white" or "holy" magic, which he argued set the power of Satan and wicked men above that of divine spirits and the godly:

> And hence I would inqvire, Whether some good Angells were not subjugated vnder the commands of some good men, whose faith is exalted to the power of effectuall blessings, & just authenticall Curses! [. . .] Can witches Curse & blesse effectually, & yet can our moderne faith allow it, that the church of God hath noe efficacy or credit, either vpon mount Ebal, or vpon mount Gerzim?[92]

Contemporaries often linked supernatural inspiration to communication with spirits; it seems likely that they may have been connected in Beale's mind. Implicit in Beale's critique was the idea that scholastics rejected genuine prophetic insights derived from contemporary prophets and the legitimate oracles of pagan antiquity and modern gentiles. Rather than defining them against the Christian canon, Beale believed that God willingly gave his inspiration to those outside of the faith for the purposes of testimony and conviction. "The holy Records beare evidence, that God sent his Messengers, the prophets to the neighbour nations; And the Gentiles had their many Sibylls, That had very particular revelations as appeares in honest history," he wrote. On this account, he revealed

[91] Beale to Worthington, 12 June 1658, 3a–3b.

[92] Beale to Worthington, 12 June 1658, 4a. The reference to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerzim recalls an incident in the Jordan Valley in Deuteronomy 27, where Moses splits the tribes of Israel into two groups and sends the first to pronounce blessings on Mount Gerizim and the second to pronounce curses on Mount Ebal.

another way in which his belief in the perennial and universal nature of spiritual knowledge was cast in a different mould from that of Smith and More, who had more rigid opinions about who had access to rational and religious truth in the past and the present. Beale professed himself "soe far from their opinion who deny, that the best of Christians have any inspirations in these dayes, that I doubt not but God hath his true Prophets, divinely inspired, at this time, amongst Turkes, Iewes, & gentiles."[93]

6. *Conclusion*

This chapter has explored how the assumptions of traditional religious and philosophical orthodoxy were placed under stress in the mid-seventeenth century. John Smith's *Select Discourses* demonstrate how establishment thinkers, looking to draw afresh from the wells of classical philosophy, remained true to many of the traditional terms of the relationship between Greek theory and scholastic doctrine. A prominent aspect of the new appeal to Platonist philosophy was an emphasis on the human senses and the imagination as a medium for interaction between humanity and the divine, a mediation that was seemingly threatened by austere materialist philosophies. However, the attractions of sceptical and materialist discourses for attacking the claims of popular and "illiterate" illuminism complicated or undercut the confidence that John Smith placed in the spiritual senses. Henry More's criticism of the use of the senses in discerning the presence of divine power posed difficult questions for the ecstatic elements of his own philosophical school.

By contrast, John Beale had an altogether different understanding of the contemporary relevance of enthusiasm and prophecy from those who married conservative theological views to Neoplatonism. Beale sought to preserve a scripturalist sense of God's sovereignty while discarding the metaphysical strictures that others had used to fill out the framework of superstition. He rejected both the confidence of speculative philosophy and the use of empiricism as a reductive tool of naturalism for the sceptic, instead preserving a belief that the spiritual was essential and inseparable from man's experience. The soul really did possess "eyes to see" and "ears to

[93] Beale to Worthington, 12 June 1658, 1a–1b.

hear."[94] Beale's vision of the correct relationship between human knowledge and God's agency in the cosmos owed greatly to the Puritan ethos of spiritual experimentalism. Universal salvation would come through the power of God's will revealing itself in history, a dynamic that would always outstrip the insight of any purely rational tools laid out to analyse divine actions. The divine will was not amenable to analysis in human terms; it was inscrutable, self-willed, and beyond man's natural understanding. Indeed, Beale's belief that prophecy should and could not be judged by "comon notions or the evidence of outward sense, or else a cleere & distinct deduction from thiese" may have placed it even beyond the scope of his own Baconian methods of enquiry. His own opinion, however, was clearly that the testimony of "experience" was a superior means of integrating the natural and the spiritual within the human understanding, than the speculative philosophy of the old schools.

Classical and medieval doctrines concerning the role of spirits in prophecy continued to be bound together beyond the 1650s in speculations about angels. A treatise by the French theologian Moses Amyraut, published in France in 1659 and in English translation in 1676, used many of the same criteria as Aquinas and John Smith in describing the nature, definition, and theoretical characteristics of prophetic dreams and visions, while maintaining that true prophetic visions had ended.[95] As Joad Raymond has noted, dreams were considered a proof of angelic beings and were implicated in the doctrine that divine truth accommodated itself to the human senses, as John Smith propounded in his *Discourses.*[96] Dreams enjoyed an increased status amongst Platonist and theosophic thinkers because they embraced the belief that man could transcend his physical limits through purifying his immaterial faculties. The most enthusiastic proponents of such theories of sublime vision were inspired by the occult philosophies of the Renaissance and the theosophic mysticism of Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), which provided intellectual fuel to cultures of anti-formalist religious piety. Growing scholarship in

[94] Ezekiel 12:2. "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a provoking house: who have eyes to see, and see not: and ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a provoking house."

[95] Moses Amyraut, *A Discourse Concerning the Divine Dreams Mention'd in Scripture* (London, 1676).

[96] Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, 351–353.

this area has established an increasing number of links between seventeenth-century theosophic thought and the intellectual imagination of eighteenth century writers and romantics.[97]

Beale's attempt to establish a new context for the definition of prophecy can be viewed as foreshadowing the role played by empirical and experimental methodologies in dismantling the doctrines of superstition, a process described by Euan Cameron in *Enchanted Europe*.[98] Beale's approach to dreams and spirits can be viewed as prototypical of the intellectual liberty indulged by More, Glanvill, and Aubrey, going beyond the bounds of the orthodox doctrines of superstition. Cameron has shown that Henry More, in his later partnership with Joseph Glanvill, became open to courting the many heterodox elements of popular report and folk belief, all in aid of defending the existence of spiritual beings against the perceived threat of "Saducism", those philosophers who denied the existence of the immaterial. The antiquarian and biographer John Aubrey recorded prognostic dreams in his *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (1696), writing with similar intent to More. Meric Casaubon could similarly be found advocating an empirical attitude towards the world of the spirits.[99] These late seventeenth-century writers defended the existence of the immaterial world by appeal to an empirical method that privileged raw evidence before the pre-given rules of metaphysical doctrines to which they themselves had once been beholden.[100]

In the end, however, Beale found himself in an ironic position. The kind of methods he advocated could now be applied by his more conservative colleagues in the Royal Society to the task of justifying the existence of the spirit world, but not to the subject of prophecy which continued to be viewed as a threat to rational religious experience.[101] Angelic and divinatory dreams were reduced to a side-

[97] See Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 105–226; Ariel Hessayon, "Jacob Boehme and the Early Quakers," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 60 (2005): 191–223; "Jacob Boehme, Emanuel Swedenborg and their readers," in *The Arms of Morpheus: Essays on Swedenborg and Mysticism*, ed. Stephen McNeilly (London: Swedenborg Society, 2007), 17–56; and Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei, eds., *Jacob Boehme (1575–1624): An Introduction to his Thought and its Reception* (forthcoming).

[98] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*.

[99] See Euan Cameron's chapter above, 50.

[100] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 241–46, 270–85.

[101] Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable*, 165-210

note in the former enterprise, and their use hardly pointed toward a certain or sure art of religious interpretation of the kind that Beale hoped for. In his public life after the Restoration Beale found himself limited to pursuing the practical and utilitarian goals of the Society, the scope of which could only represent a frustration to his spiritual idealism and his fervent belief that a pragmatic understanding of prophetic experience was a crucial instrument for the fulfilment of man's religious destiny.[102]

[102] Leslie, "The Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale," 168–69.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GIJSBERT VOET AND *DISCRETIO SPIRITUUM* AFTER DESCARTES

ANTHONY OSSA-RICHARDSON*

From the start, the basis of philosophy has been a distinction between truth and appearances. The philosopher has always sought to *discern* the true from the false, and especially from the specious false: true generosity from specious extravagance, the true friend from the specious flatterer, and true universals from the specious coming and going of sensory particulars.[1] Modernity, the age of the individual, has given centre stage to the problems raised in antiquity about the reliability of private experience and private judgment: how can we be sure that our senses are accurate and our reasons well founded? These were the first questions addressed by René Descartes in his *Meditations* of 1641, in response both to prevailing scholastic theories of knowledge, and to the challenge offered by the Pyrrhonist scepticism uncorked in the previous century.[2]

The first Meditation seeks a foundation for knowledge—something which cannot be doubted. The material world is out of the question, since our senses deceive us every day. To give the case put forward in the sixth Meditation, and recycled today in undergraduate textbooks, square towers look round in the distance—a standard example from early modern scholastic philosophy.[3] Moreover, very often we think we are awake, when in fact we are

* The author thanks Stuart Clark and Theo Verbeek for their helpful discussions of this paper's theoretical and historical aspects.

[1] Aristotle, *Ethics* 4:1; Plutarch, *De discrimine adulatoris et amici*; Plato, *Republic* 6.

[2] The literature on Descartes and his *Meditations* is, of course, almost unplumbable, and I will not attempt to plumb it here. The Pyrrhonic context of the *Meditations* was most famously elaborated in: Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960).

[3] René Descartes, *Meditationes* 6, in his *Oeuvres*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1897–1913), 7:76. The example, presumably commonplace even in antiquity, is raised in Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 4:353, and Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* 7:208.

dreaming. How then can we know that we are not dreaming *now*? Even mathematical truths are not safe from doubt: although God would not deceive us into believing that 2 and 2 are 4, a malicious spirit or demon (*genius aliquis malignus*) could.[4] But how are we to discern true belief, and true experience, from the sensory or intellectual errors threatened by the demon?

This was looking rather like the medieval question of *discretio spirituum*: only what was there a problem of *spiritual* experience was here a problem of experience as a whole. It was even couched in the same language. Jean Gerson (1363–1429), still the standard authority on the subject in Descartes's time, had compared *discretio* to the discernment of dreams from waking life.[5] This is not to suggest that Descartes had Gerson in mind when he penned the first Meditation, and there is good evidence that he did not himself take the demon hypothesis seriously, even if he should have done.[6] But the similarity is remarkable, and, speaking historically, more than a coincidence. The same problem, whatever its motivation, invited the same frame.

Descartes, however, was moving in a very different direction and expressed no interest in the complexities of Church teaching on the matter. He simply assumed that we *cannot* discount the possibility of demonic deception, and so we cannot trust the general reliability of our senses—at least, not until the existence of a beneficent, non-deceiving God has been established. This is achieved by the light of reason: it is reason that tells us we exist, and reason, with its "clear and distinct ideas," that proves the existence of God. With God in place, the value of sensory evidence can be safeguarded, since He

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[4] Descartes, *Meditationes* 1, in *Oeuvres*, 7:22. See also Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 293.

[5] Jean Gerson, "De probatione spirituum," in his *Opera omnia*, ed. Louis Ellies du Pin, 5 vols. (Antwerp, 1706), 1:1, col. 38. On Gerson and *discretio* see Paschal Boland, *The Concept of Discretio Spirituum in John Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis"* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), and Cornelius Roth, *Discretio Spirituum: Kriterien geistlicher Unterscheidung bei Johannes Gerson* (Würzburg: Echter, 2001).

[6] Pierre Bourdin pressed him on this point, *Seventh Objections* 1:1, in Descartes, *Oeuvres*, 7:455–56. On Descartes's own indifference to the "demon hypothesis," see Geoffrey Scarre, "Demons, Demonologists, and Descartes," *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990): 3–22, and Richard A. Watson, "Descartes' Scepticism vs. Biography," in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Richard Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 46–58.

has given us the intellectual faculty to correct any errors deriving from our senses, and in the majority of instances we do correct these errors.[7] Everything winds up looking much the same as before, only now it has been grounded in reason. That is, *Descartes's* reason, which, to his surprise, turned out not to be the same as everyone else's.

Descartes's contemporaries, meanwhile, continued the old scholastic discussion of *discretio spirituum*. They shared many of his theoretical concerns and posed a similar problem to that of the First Meditation. But did his work have any impact on theirs, and if so, what kind of impact? How did his answers help to shape their discourse? In attempting to answer these questions, a good place to start is the work of an early critic of Descartes, the Dutch theologian Gijsbert Voet or Voetius (1589–1676). Voetius not only critiqued Cartesian epistemology, he also held two disputations on the discernment of spirits. The problem of discernment may be seen as integral to a cluster of issues central to Voetius's thought, resonating against the incursions of Cartesian metaphysics, ill understood.

1. *Voetius contra Descartes*

Voetius was forty-five years old when he was appointed to the chair of theology at the University of Utrecht, in 1634.[8] He had already advocated a strict form of Calvinism against Arminius at the Synod of Dort in 1618; as a professor he advanced a late scholastic Aristotelianism.[9] Both of his allegiances, to Calvin and to Aristotle, would be ruffled by the Cartesian philosophy being developed in the late 1630s. Lacking French, Voetius was unable to read Descartes's *Dis-*

[7] Descartes, *Meditationes* 6, in *Oeuvres*, 7:80. See also *Sixth Objections* 9, in *Oeuvres*, 7:418, making use of another standard scholastic example of sensory error, the stick which appears bent in water, and Descartes's *Sixth Replies*, in *Oeuvres*, 7:438–39, insisting that it is the intellect, not the senses themselves, which correct the error.

[8] On Voetius's life, see, first of all, A. C. Duker's gargantuan biography, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1893–1915); but also W. J. van Asselt, *Voetius* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 2007), 13–43, and Andreas J. Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676): Sein Theologieverständnis und seine Gotteslehre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2007), 35–59.

[9] On Voetius at Dort, see Duker, *Voetius*, 1:283–91. On Voetius's brand of scholasticism, see Asselt, *Voetius*, 47–53, and Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992), 6–7.

course on Method of 1637, and he first came into conflict with the public activities of Descartes's associates and disciples at Utrecht. His public antagonism to Descartes and his ideas blew up in 1640, in what has come to be known as the Utrecht Crisis.[10]

Descartes—or rather, the shadowy threat which Descartes *represented*—haunts many of the theological disputations held by Voetius in Utrecht at the time, though he is rarely named. The disputation texts were published as a collection from 1648, in five bulging volumes, together over five thousand pages long. The material, which begins as early as 1634, is not in chronological order; Voetius expanded and arranged the printed pieces as he saw fit, adding cross-references between them.[11] Although each text represents an individual engagement with a student, the disputations cannot be taken in isolation: the same themes, arguments, and examples appear again and again throughout the corpus. What we see in the printed volumes is a single theology, a single metaphysics, changing little, glimpsed from a thousand angles. Each tract foregrounds a different piece of the picture: but all the other pieces remain there in the background.

Descartes's importance for the theology of the *Disputations* is signalled at the start. In the preface to his first volume, Voetius discusses the circumstances surrounding the publication of the *Meditations*, and the long critique of it which appeared the following year, entitled *The Admirable Method*.[12] That critique, although published as the work of Voetius's student, Marten Schoock,

[10] The best account of this is Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 13–33; but see also, from Voetius's perspective, Beck, *Voetius*, 65–72, and Duker, *Voetius*, 2:141–87; and from Descartes's, Desmond M. Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 218–47. The relevant texts have been helpfully assembled and translated into French by Theo Verbeek as *La querelle d'Utrecht* ([Paris]: Les impressions nouvelles, 1988).

[11] On Voetius's disputations, and his *Disputations*, see W. J. van Asselt and E. Dekker, *De scholastieke Voetius: Een luisteroefening aan de hand van Voetius' "Disputationes Selectae"* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1995), 16–30; and Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 30–32 and 444–58. Both books include appendices listing the five volumes' disputations and their respondents. On disputation practice during this period, see Kevin Chang, "From Oral Disputation to Written Text: The Transformation of the Dissertation in Early Modern Europe," *History of Universities*, 19, no. 2 (2004): 129–87.

[12] "Praefatio ad lectorem," in Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum* [henceforth, *SD*], 5 vols. (Utrecht and Amsterdam, 1648–69), vol. 1, esp. sigs. **4r-***2v, referring to Marten Schoock, *Admiranda methodus novae philosophiae Renati des Cartes* (Utrecht, 1643). Cf. "Paralipomena quaedam," *SD* 1:1158–60.

represented many of his own ideas, and glimpses of its content can be seen in his disputations on atheism from 1639.[13] Of the many complaints levelled at the French upstart in the *Method*, perhaps the most fundamental concerns his views of the proper principles and criteria of human judgment. Descartes is said to deny the wisdom of books, and of the senses, and to set up in their stead the supreme value of his own private reason. As Schoock puts it:

> Descartes teaches his followers not only to reject everything old but also to be aware how weak are their reasons for trusting their senses, and how uncertain are all judgments which they have built upon them.[14]

For Schoock and Voetius, this was quite wrong. The mind "needs the external senses as a guide," by which to examine and test its axioms.[15] Likewise, it is not the intellect which corrects sensory errors, as Descartes had claimed, but rather the senses themselves.[16] The devil, they argue, is close to "contemplative teachers and proud meditators," and will lead the unwary Cartesian away from God to an adoration of the self. In this respect Descartes and his followers may be compared to "Enthusiasts," that is, the frenzied Anabaptists who turn inside for a knowledge of God, a group strongly rejected

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[13] Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 33. Voetius held four disputations on atheism in the summer of 1639, published in *SD* 1:114–226, and Descartes believed himself to have been a primary target; see Theo Verbeek, "From 'Learned Ignorance' to Scepticism: Descartes and Calvinist Orthodoxy," in Popkin and Vanderjagt, *Scepticism and Irreligion*, 31–45, here 31. It is likely, however, that Descartes was only an indirect (and indeed unread) target, mediated by his public defenders at Utrecht. Schoock later published his own treatise *De scepticismo* (Groningen, 1652), left unfinished, but containing many of the same themes as the *Admiranda methodus*. See also Antonella del Prete, "Against Descartes: Marten Schoock's *De scepticismo*," in *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*, ed. Gianni Paganini (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 135–148.

[14] Schoock, *Methodus*, 255 (4:2). "Docet ergo sectatores suos [. . .] vetera non tantum omnia abdicare, sed et advertere quam debiles sint rationes ob quas sensibus suis hactenus crediderunt, et quam incerta sint omnia judicia, quae illis superstruxerunt." Cf. Voetius's critique of radical doubt and the rejection of the senses, "De atheismo," *SD* 1:125–27, 176–78, on which, see also Verbeek, "From 'Learned Ignorance' to Scepticism," 35. Descartes, "Epistola ad Voetium," in his *Oeuvres*, vol. 8, part 2, 169–71, would accuse Voetius of hypocrisy on this point.

[15] Schoock, *Methodus*, 256 (4:2). Cf. Schoock, *De scepticismo*, 170 (2:20). "Mens enim sive intellectus [. . .] sensibus externis ut ducibus, haut aliter indiget ac coecus suo ductore."

[16] Schoock, *Methodus*, 253 (4:1), explicitly answering Descartes's *Sixth Replies* (above, n. 7).

by Catholics and (other) Protestants alike for over a century.[17] According to Voetius and Schoock, then, the senses are a useful guide, underwritten by a providential God, and common to all, while private reason, by contrast, can be corrupted by the devil; this is the hallmark of Calvin and Aristotle. It is not that they were naive about the dangers of trusting the senses—in at least one disputation Voetius brings up the standard scholastic example of the distant tower.[18] But such illusions should not lead us to reject the senses altogether; rather, the certitude of the senses, "if the appropriate criteria are only observed, can easily be saved from any error."[19] These criteria are not made explicit; the reader's knowledge is assumed. But when it came to advancing criteria for establishing certainty in the discernment of spirits, the matter was not obviously the same. There, perhaps, confidence was harder won.

2. *Voetius on* discretio spirituum

Voetius held his two disputations on *discretio spirituum* in the summer of 1648. The first, conducted with Cornelius Hoogesteger on 24 June, was theoretical, while the second, from 12 July, with the Hungarian *émigré* Peter Bacca,[20] applied the principles of the first to a real-life case—the Presburg (Bratislava) haunting of 1641–42.[21] Even before their publication in the second printed volume (1655), the

[17] Schoock, *Methodus*, 257–58 (4:2), and cf. Verbeek, *Descartes*, 22. On the context of enthusiasm and its early modern critics, see Michael Heyd, "*Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 124.

[18] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:987.

[19] Schoock, *Methodus*, 253 (4:1). "si debita κριτήρια observentur, facile a quibuscunque fallaciis vindicari potest [sc. certitudo sensus]."

[20] On Voetius's Hungarian students see Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier, 1600–1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 61.

[21] The case is known from a document of 1643, the *Narratio rei mirabilis* of Michael Kopchani, reprinted in the middle of Bacca's disputation (*SD* 2:1141–61). It continued to be of interest to later folklorists and pathologists, appearing in German as "Eine Erscheinung in Pressburg," in *Das Schaltjahr: Welches ist, Der teutsch Kalender mit den Figuren, und hat 366 Tag*, ed. Johann Scheible, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: 1846), 5:332–63, and in Charles Richet's English translation, *Annals of Psychical Science* 1 (April 1905): 207–29, accompanied by his "Critical Study on the Apparition at Presbourg," *APS* 1 (July 1905): 53–61. See also Alexander Gaibl, *Narratio rei admirabilis* (Bratislava: Katholisch-Literarischen Aktiengesellschaft, [1910]).

subject was well-connected with the rest of Voetius's *oeuvre*: the surface of the first disputation text is liberally garnished with cross-references to others on crucial parts of the question—on spectres, on demons, on temptation, on superstition, on prophecy, on atheism, and on possession. He also refers to his early disputation on the role of reason in matters of faith—a tract placed at the outset of the five published volumes, serving to guide the methodology of the work as a whole. Likewise, the tract on *discretio* is proleptically cross-referenced in his disputation on spectres, printed in the first volume.[22]

Also striking is Voetius's field of *external* reference: he cites dozens of Catholic texts on *discretio*, but not a single Protestant work.[23] He is conversant with the entire gamut of Catholic theory, past and present, drawing on exorcism manuals, devotional texts, mystical and practical theology, Biblical commentary, religious biography, treatises on medicine, natural magic, and witchcraft—even salty folklore.[24] He recalls a legend attributed to St Francis of Assisi, where the friar counsels his disciple, Brother Juniper, to test a vexing spirit by telling it, "Open your mouth so that I may shit into it." Juniper did as he was bade, and the spirit, revealed as the devil, vanished.[25] The field of reference in his disputation reveals

[22] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:1002–3. He also refers back to the disputation later, e.g., at *SD* 4:748.

[23] There are, however, references to several Protestant works on ancillary subjects, such as John Davenant, *Determinationes quaestionum quarundam theologicarum*; Petrus Cunaeus, *Satyra Sardi venales*; and Caspar Peucer, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus*. In particular, Voetius hints at the relevance of practical theology to *discretio*, naming in particular the *De conscientia* of his old colleague at Dort, William Ames: see "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 1:1103, 1110, and cf. his five disputations "De theologia practica," *SD* 3:1–59.

[24] Among other modern Catholic works, Voetius refers to Bartholomaeus Sibylla, *Speculum peregrinae*; Martin Delrio, *Disquisitiones magicae*; Jean Lorin, *In catholicas tres B. Joannis et duas B. Petri Epistolas commentarii*; Girolamo Menghi, *Flagellum daemonum*; Claude Landry's much-expanded 1620 edition of the *Malleus maleficarum*; Juan Azor, *Institutio moralium*; Giambattista Della Porta, *Magia naturalis*; Juan Maldonado, *Commentarii in quattuor Evangelistas*; Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*; Martin Bresser, *De conscientia*; Petrus Thyraeus, *De apparitionibus*; Maximilianus Sandaeus, *Theologia mystica*; Giovanni Battista Codronchi, *De morbis veneficis*; Paolo Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*; Hadrianus Hadrianius, *De divinis inspirationibus*; Leonard Lessius, *De dignoscenda vocatione*; Thomas a Jesu, *De conversione gentium procuranda*; Antonio Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta*.

[25] Voetius liked the story so much he recited it (at least) twice: "De spectris," *SD* 1:997, and "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1130 In neither case does he name his

the subject's confessional history—it was primarily a Catholic problem, associated above all with mysticism and monasticism. In the seventeenth centry, it was the Catholics, notably the Italian clerics Domenico Gravina and Giovanni Bona, who were devoting entire tomes to the subject, and sizeable ones at that.[26]

These were wholly conventional books, recycling and organising the precepts of discernment found in the Desert Fathers and scholastics. Bona, especially, knows not only Gerson but John Cassian and St Anthony, St Bernard and Richard of St Victor, Denys the Carthusian, Henry of Langenstein, and Henry of Freimar. From these came a profusion of rules and signs for telling good spirits from bad; but at the same time, a warning against individual decision-making—the *discretio* literature as a whole advocates humility and the rejection of private instinct. As Cassian, one of Gerson's sources, had already argued in the fifth century:

> True discernment is acquired only with true humility. The first proof of this humility will be if all things are reserved for the examination of elders, so that one assents to nothing by his own judgment, accepting their decrees on all counts, and knows from their traditions what ought to be judged good or bad. For a man cannot be deceived at all who lives not by his own judgment, but by the example of his elders.[27]

Gerson, likewise, emphasized humility, admitting that *discretio*, as a learned ability rather than as a charism, could only ever be fallible and approximate, founded not on reason, but on experience and

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source. The tale has its origins in the *Actus Beati Francisci* and the *Fioretti*: see *Actus Beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, ed. Paul Sabatier (Paris: Fischbacher, 1902), 107–12 (ch. 31), and *I fioretti di San Francesco*, ed. Angelo Sodini (Milan: Mondadori, 1926), 327–31 (ch. 29). But Voetius could not have known the former, which remained unpublished, nor read the latter, and whether he heard or read the story, the intermediate source was probably Bartholomaeus of Pisa, *Liber conformitatum* (Milan, 1510), fol. 52r, a book outlining the correspondences between the lives of St Francis and Jesus. The original story is told of Ruffinus, not Juniper.

[26] Domenico Gravina, *Ad discernendas veras a falsis visionibus et revelationibus ΒΑΣΑΝΙΤΗΣ, hoc est, Lapis Lydius, theoricam et praxim complectens* (Naples, 1638); Giovanni Bona, *De discretione spirituum liber unus* (Paris, 1673).

[27] John Cassian, *Collationes XXIV*, ed. H. Hurter (Innsbruck: Wagneriana, 1887), 55–56 (2:10). "Vera discretio non nisi vera humilitate acquiritur. Cujus humilitatis haec erit prima probatio, si universa [. . .] seniorum reserventur examini, ut nihil suo quis judicio credens illorum per omnia definitionibus acquiescat, et quid bonum vel malum debeat judicare, eorum traditione cognoscat [. . .] Nullatenus enim decipi poterit quisque non suo judicio, sed majorum vivit exemplo."

intuition.[28] It produced, at best, a *moral* certitude, as Bona later stipulated; and this was concordant with Gerson's theology in general.[29] Later writers preserved his probabilistic approach to the subject; but they offered, if anything, still fewer assurances. For instance, whereas Gerson had insisted that divine prophecy, unlike demonic prognostication, always came true in the precise sense intended,[30] Bona insists on the fallibility of human interpretation—as is clear from the Bible, prophecies do *not* always come true in the sense apparently intended.[31] An enigmatic prediction could then be just as well divine as diabolic, from our limited human perspective. Given all this, *discretio* is almost a phantom, and such is the paradox of the literature: books about how to tell good spirits from bad have, at their core, the message that you cannot tell good spirits from bad. The devil will always get round you, if he wants to; you can only cling to the Church, and hope for the best.

The references in Voetius's first disputation on *discretio*, then, show us two things: that he saw himself as broaching a Catholic subject, and that nevertheless it had a close association with many other aspects of his thought and teaching as a Calvinist. Its importance for Voetius, *especially* as a Calvinist, is underlined by one passage above all, where he argues that the charism of discernment was the *same* gift by which the Evangelists produced their Gospels: after all, if their work was inspired, they had to discern that inspiration as divine, and not diabolic. "And this," he adds, "must be established if we would safeguard the authority of the Holy Scriptures."[32] Discernment of spirits thus stands at the centre of the Christian tradition.

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[28] Gerson, "De probatione spirituum," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col 38. "Probare spiritus, si ex Deo sunt per regulam artis generalem et infallibilem pro particulari casu, aut non potest aux [*sic*, i.e., aut] vix potest humanitus fieri; sed requiritur donum Spiritus sancti," and cf. his "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col. 44 on the fallibility of discernment, and col. 48 on humility.

[29] Bona, *De discretione*, 53 (5:3), and cf. 45 (4:11). See Jean Delumeau, *L'Aveu et le pardon: Les difficultés de la confession XIIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 128, on Gerson's probabilism.

[30] Gerson, "De distinctione," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col. 51.

[31] Bona, *De discretione*, 130–32 (8:3). Cf. Voetius, "De prophetia," *SD* 2:1045, who states that divine prophecy is never "ambigua" like diabolic predictions, although it is "saepe αἰνιγματώδης, aut quacunque alia ratione magis involuta et obscura."

[32] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1117. "hoc necessario statuendum siquidem sacrae scripturae autoritatem tueri velimus."

In fact, the whole matter of *discretio* had been settled in his mind long before 1648. He had raised it already in his disputation on spectres from 1637, with much the same conclusions. Those conclusions are rather contradictory: that discernment is important for the Christian conscience, and that discernment is impossible. Important, because it is the same faculty by which we may know the stratagems and tricks of our spiritual enemies, and the course of divine providence in permitting evil.[33] As 1 John 4:1, a favourite passage in Voetius, had advised:

> Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Discernment is also impossible because the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44) and transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), doing good to give false credence to his evil.[34] We can offer signs only *after* the apparition of a spirit, when we have had time to assess its aims and results, and then only negatively.[35] That is, there are factors by which we can know for certain a spirit is evil, but none by which we can be sure it is angelic or divine—only suggestive indications at best. As he would later put it, adopting Aristotelian terminology in Greek letters barely legible in the cheap print, the positive signs that a spirit is divine "are not τεκμήρια [sure signs] but only εἰκότα [probable]."[36] Thus if a spirit's message is contrary to received truth or Scripture, or if it contains any self-contradiction, we can be sure it is diabolic. But even if it does not break any of these rules, the spirit is not necessarily divine for the devil is shrewd and can easily deceive us. Similar one-way signs appear in other disputations. On prophecy, for instance, Deuteronomy

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[33] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:1013.

[34] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:1015. Cf. "De daemoniis," *SD* 1:947, and 1:971–74 on the devil as mimic. Cf. also Gerson, "De probatione spirituum," *Opera*, vol. 1, cols. 39–40, and "De distinctione," *Opera*, vol. 1, col. 96; Bona, *De discretione*, 166–69 (11:6–7).

[35] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:991. "Distinctio inter spectra, et divinas et angelicasque apparitiones; negative quidem et a posteriori, sed non aeque positive et a priori, communi judicio hactenus statui potuit," and cf. at more length *SD* 1:1012.

[36] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1120. "Ista non sunt τεκμήρια, sed tantum εἰκότα ex quibus bonis signis si adsint, affirmate probabiliter tantum concludi et praesumi potest, quod sit spiritus divinus extraordinarius: sed ex oppositis signis malis si adsint, negative et certo concludi potest, non esse spiritum divinum."

18:21–22 tells us that a prediction is to be rejected as diabolic if it doesn't come true—sound advice, we can be sure, and recycled throughout the *discretio* literature. John Chrysostom, meanwhile, pointed out that divine visitation is never accompanied by the sort of frenzy seen among the possessed: but, as Voetius notes, the reverse does not hold, for an absence of frenzy does not indicate divinity.[37] In other words, no matter how virtuous a spirit seems to be, it might *still* be diabolical, and so we must remain undecided. Deferring judgment is always safest. And when we do make a judgment, the only rule is that of the Bible. Voetius writes:

> God neither furnishes us, nor promises to furnish us, with any extraordinary revelation of the spirit, nor do we expect and desire it, because of course we have Moses and the Prophets, to whom we submit.[38]

His chief target, here as elsewhere, is Catholicism. "The errors and idolatry of the pagans and the papists," he writes, "owe their origin mostly to the apparitions and oracles of spectres."[39] But because discernment is ultimately impossible, there is simply no way for these groups to ensure that their revelations are true and divine. In another work of about the same time, he asks, "On what basis can the popes and Catholic councils know for certain that their persuasions and inspirations are from the Holy Spirit, and not from the devil, or from their own corrupt nature?"[40] Even official papal exorcists agree that discernment is not really possible: so how can we trust a religion which accepts the visions of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross?[41] Such an attack on Catholicism is also central to the 1648 tract on the discernment of spirits. Voetius asks:

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[37] Voetius, "De prophetia," *SD* 2:1046–47, and John Chrysostom, *Homily 29 on 1 Corinthians 12;1–2*. Cf. Bona, *De discretione*, 309–22 (17:5).

[38] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:991. "Deus extraordinariam spiritus revelationem nobis non suppeditat, nec suppeditaturum se promisit, nec nos eam exspectamus aut desideramus; habentes quippe Mosen et prophetas, in quibus aquiescemus." Cf. Gerson, "De probatione spirituum," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col. 40.

[39] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:994. "Spectrorum apparitionibus et responsis maximam partem Gentilium et Papistarum errores ac idololatriae originem suam debent."

[40] Voetius, "Novus Loioliticus scepticismus," *SD* 1:113. "Quaeritur unde praedicti Papae et Concilia *primo*, in se certo scire queant persuasiones et inspirationes esse a Spir. S. et non esse a diabolo, aut corrupta sua natura?"

[41] Voetius, "De spectris," *SD* 1:1014.

> Should we accept those signs of apparitions, visions, and so on, which the papists vaunt as their own, just because they appear not frightening in form or manner, but with the light which the Divine Radiance pours into men, and because, when they withdraw, they leave men not sad or perturbed but happy?[42]

He responds:

> That all these and other things pertaining to the external form and disposition of appearing angels are certainly false, we may learn from 2 Corinthians 11:14.[43]

Again and again, Voetius drives a wedge between Catholic theory and Catholic practice. This is well illustrated by the case of Philip Neri, who established the Oratorian order in 1575. Neri had warned his initiates against dabbling in visions, and yet his biographer ascribed to him the power of discerning true spirits from false.[44] Voetius goes on to argue that modern discernment, not given as a charism, can attain only probable results, as the Catholics themselves admit—he here quotes Gerson, the Jesuit Martin Delrio, and others.[45] Finally, he concludes that all this renders Catholic doctrine unusable. The waters of Rome are polluted and so unsafe to drink.

But the question remains—why are Catholics so willing to trust spiritual visions? The answer to this reveals, at the heart of the disputation, a more fundamental problem of epistemology—the *locus* of authority for the individual's judgment, a *locus* often referred to as the *lapis Lydius*, the Lydian stone, that is, the touchstone on which real gold, but not fake, leaves a yellow mark.[46] The basic metaphor is

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[42] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1128. "An valeant signa illa apparitionum, visionum etc. quae Pontificii quidam desumunt, ex eo quod forma aut modo terribili non appareat, quod cum luce, quod hominibus affundat lumen, quodque discedens eosdem non tristes aut perturbatos sed laetos relinquat, etc." A standard criterion in the *discretio* literature; see, for instance, Bona, *De discretione*, 83–84, citing Augustine, but found already in Athanasius, *Vita Sancti Antonii*, sec. 35.

[43] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1128. "Haec aliaque omnia ad externam formam et habitum apparentium angelorum pertinentia [. . .] maxime fallacia esse, docemur ex 2 Corinth 11 vers 14 ipsi Pontificii alia hoc fatentur."

[44] Antonio Gallonio, *Vita Beati Philippi Nerii Florentini Congregationis Oratorii fundatoris in annos digesta* (Rome, 1600), 58, cited in Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1128–29.

[45] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1129. Specific citations are not given, but see above, n. 28. On Martin Delrio, see Jan Machielsen's contribution to this volume, esp. 117–22.

[46] Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis* 33:126.

ancient: Cassian, and after him Gerson, had compared *discretio* to the testing of counterfeit coins.[47] Domenico Gravina called his own treatise on *discretio*, published in 1638, the *Lydian Stone* for discerning true visions and revelations from false. And when Schoock inquired after Descartes's principle of knowledge, he asked, "what is the Lydian stone on which the new Cartesian philosophy tests all its data and dogmas?"[48]

It was the nature of this "stone," this point of authority, that Voetius was attempting to negotiate in his own tract. Like the Catholics, Voetius is still dealing with the *signs* or principles of discernment, in an array of scholastic dichotomies: general or specific, internal or external, fallible or infallible, primary or secondary.[49] The disputation itself is arranged in the printed volume as the sixth part of a series of tracts "de signis," along with miracles, presages of death, prophecy and charisms. But this semiotics of discernment was just as useless in Voetius as it had been in his Catholic predecessors and contemporaries—a merely probable judgment was no good in the face of an enemy whose capacity to deceive always outstripped the powers of the human intellect. Voetius's obvious recourse, in search of moral certainty, was the Bible, and indeed, he insisted that Scripture offered the only important rule in *discretio*:

> The one universal and adequate principle is the word of God, written in the Bible: for if the spirit does not agree with that, it may immediately be judged a private spirit, whether human or diabolical, and therefore false and evil. This is the most important criterion: because neither God nor the Holy Spirit can disagree with themselves.[50]

But even Voetius was forced to admit that the Bible could offer only general rules, not guidance about specific cases of spiritual dis-

[47] Cassian, *Collationes* 55 (2:9); Gerson, "De distinctione," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col 43.

[48] Schoock, *Methodus*, 106 (2:6). "Deinceps expendendum, quisnam Lydius lapis sit, ad quem nova Cartesii philosophia [. . .] omnia sua scita ac dogmata explorat."

[49] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1112.

[50] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1112. "Primarium, est unum, universale et adaequatum: verbum Dei, scriptum in codice bibliorum: nam si spiritus cum illo non consentiat, jam ilico judicabitur spiritus privatus, sive humanus, sive diabolicus, et consequenter fallax et malus. Ratio rationum haec est: Quia non potest Deus seu Spiritus S[anctus] secum pugnare." This was a stronger statement than Bona, *De discretione*, 55 (5:2). "in sacris literis optima ad discernendos spiritus institutio contineatur."

cernment.[51] Nor was it entirely lucid as a source of *exempla*. Why, asked Catholic exegetes, was it acceptable for Mary to express doubt at the Annunciation, when Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, was punished by God for his incredulity? To explain the difference had taken all the resources of Jesuit casuistry.[52]

Nonetheless, Voetius rejected all those who sought another norm—*a priori* opinions, common sense, tradition, teachers, a corrupt private reason, devilish oracles, the impostures of magicians, and so on.[53] The first items on this list stand for the Catholics, whose mistake is to locate the point of authority in the Church. The Jesuits, above all, are guilty of trusting too much in their superiors: he quotes Cornelius a Lapide on 1 John 4.1, that "the Lydian stone by which spirits and doctrines are to be tried is *not* one's own private spirit."[54] One's spirit, admitted the Jesuit, was too susceptible to the machinations of the devil, and so one had to rely instead on an institution secured by tradition against deceit—the Church. For Voetius, of course, this was only a *larvata ecclesia*, an "enchanted" or "bewitched church," to use Calvin's expression.

The Catholics, then, were guilty of putting their faith in a spurious institution; too confident in its security, they allowed themselves to be tricked and bamboozled by the devil into accepting spiritual visions as angelic. In Voetius's remarks on discernment

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[51] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1115. "singulares illae assertiones [. . .] immediate et ex tempore cum scripturis conferri non possunt, et veritas aut falsitas earum specifice et directe deprehendi." Cf. Bona, *De discretione*, 56 (5:3). "sacra scriptura et sancti Patres singulares eventus non attingant."

[52] See, for instance, Juan de Maldonado, *Commentarii in quattuor evangelistas*, 2 vols. (Mainz, 1611), vol. 1, cols. 29–30 on Zachary (Luke 1:18), and cols. 45–46 on Mary (Luke 1:34), closely following Maldonado here, the influential work of Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*, ed. Augustin Crampon, 26 vols. (Paris: Ludovicus Vives, 1891), 16:12b on Zachary, and 16:21a–b on Mary. The Jesuit analysis of Mary's doubt is discussed in Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1104.

[53] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1112. "Rejicimus eos qui aliud probationis principium, aliam normam quaerunt et adhibent e.g., praejudicatas opiniones, sensum vulgi aut plurium, consuetudinem πατροπαράδοτην; sententias Doctorum suorum, corruptam et propriam rationem, Oracula diabolica, imposturas magorum et divinatulorum, enthusiasmos suos etc."

[54] Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria*, 20:586b. "Porro Lydius lapis, quo probandi sunt spiritus et doctrinae, est non spiritus privatus cuiusque [. . .] hic enim a diabolo esse agique potest." On the misplaced obedience of the Jesuits, see John Davenant, *Determinationes* (Cambridge, 1634), 33–38 (Quaestio 6), also cited by Voetius.

from the 1630s, this remains the chief error to be avoided. On the other side is only a vague and ill-defined scepticism: those who, like Lucian, laugh at all spirits, or with the Sadducees deny their existence.[55]

But by 1640, a new and dangerous enemy to Calvinist orthodoxy had surfaced—Descartes. It is Descartes who represents, above all, those who seek the norm of critical authority not in the Bible, or in the Church, but in what Voetius calls "corrupt private reason." Again, he is the figurehead of those "Libertines and Enthusiasts who flee to their own spirit, *proprium spiritum*, the uncreated word within themselves, and man *deified*."[56] At the final count, these are not so very different from the Catholics, in that both reject biblical authority. The positions of both groups, in Voetius's terms, led to "atheism."[57] As his close friend Johann Cloppenburg expressed it:

> The Papists go astray in the impious execution of their duties, and, so as to fill their mistake to the very brim, turn to the accusation of the Scriptures, along with the libertines and enthusiasts.[58]

It was no coincidence, for Voetius, that Descartes himself was a Catholic, and had even been trained by Jesuits, a point he emphasizes elsewhere.[59] And if Voetius had attacked Descartes for shunning the senses before, in the first disputation on *discretio* he criticises him for rejecting Scripture. In each case, the philosopher errs in following his own private light over stable (and stabilising) externals. One of the negative signs of *discretio* stipulated by Voetius reflects this: the visiting spirit must contain nothing in itself "re-

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[55] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1104.

[56] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1113. "Libertinos et Enthusiastas, qui ad proprium spiritum suum, verbum increatum in seipsis, et hominem deificatum confugunt [sic]." Cf. Gerson, "De distinctione," in *Opera*, vol. 1, col. 48. Emphasis added.

[57] Voetius, "De atheismo," *SD* 1:192–93. Cf. "Novus Loioliticus scepticismus," *SD* 1:112, "Inventarium ecclesiae romanae seu papatus," *SD* 2:688.

[58] Johann Cloppenburg (pr.), "Disputatio III, De Ecclesiae officio circa Scripturam Sacram," in *Exercitationes super locos communes theologicos* (Franeker, 1653), sig. C1v. "Papistae praevaricantur in officiorum istorum functione impie, et ut praevaricationis suae mensuram impleant, vertuntur, cum Libertinis et Enthusiastis, in accusationem Scripturarum."

[59] Voetius, "Praefatio," *SD*, vol. 1, sig. **4r, and "Paralipomena," *SD* 1:1158, playing up Descartes's national and confessional alterity. "Ren. des Cartes, qui ex Gallis et Iesuitarum disciplina in Belgium nostrum ad venit."

pugnant to the light of right reason [*recta ratio*] and experience." Right reason and experience do not counter faith but ballast it.[60]

Descartes, as so often, is left unnamed in the first disputation, even when he is obviously Voetius's implicit target. But his name does make a rare appearance in the second. Here Voetius lists all the supposed visionaries who have flourished since the Reformation, including Justus Velsius, the Dutch mystic; the Anabaptists Melchior Hoffmann and David Joris; Elizabeth Barton, the English seer hanged for treason in 1534; Ignatius Loyola, Paracelsus—and Descartes. All, in Voetius's eyes, peddlers of deranged nonsense. Of the last he writes:

> Among the Catholics there is some dispute these days about a certain new philosophical spirit, René Descartes. Some attack him with their arguments and reasonings, as if his method were unsuitable for establishing the truth of the Christian faith, and of natural theology, against adversaries. Others think differently —[61]

he continues, relating an episode with Marin Mersenne, with whom he had argued about Descartes some years before.[62] He quotes a letter from Mersenne of 1642:

> God has poured in to this man [i.e., Descartes] some special light, which afterwards I found in agreement with the spirit and teaching of Augustine so that I recognized almost all the same things in one as in the other.[63]

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[60] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum," *SD* 2:1120. "lumini rationis rectae et experientiae [...] repugnantia in se contineat." On Voetius's views of faith and reason, see Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 167–68.

[61] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum pars secunda," *SD* 2:1138–39. "Dubia hodie in Papatu disquisitio de novo quodam spiritu philosophico Renati des Cartes, quem nonnulli argumentis et consequentiis suis urgent, quasi inepta esset eius methodus ad veritatem fidei Christianae, et theologiae naturalis contra adversarios stabiliendam. Alii aliqui contra sentiunt."

[62] Cf. Voetius, "Paralipomena," *SD* 1:1159.

[63] Voetius, "De probatione spirituum pars secunda," *SD* 2:1139. Mersenne "profitetur, se credere lucem aliquam eximiam huic viro Deum infudisse, quam postea D. Augustini ingenio et doctrinae adeo conformem invenerit, ut eadem fere omnia in uno agnoscat ac in alio." He is quoting Mersenne's letter to Voetius of 13 Dec 1642, the Latin text of which can be found in Marin Mersenne, *Correspondance*, ed. Cornelis de Waard, 17 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1970), 11:372–76.

But who, asks Voetius, upon hearing so fine a comparison between Augustine and Descartes, will be able to restrain his laughter?[64] Descartes's "special light" is nothing but a reiteration of the old Anabaptist enthusiasm: to vaunt one's private revelations as true and reliable, one must first have certified those revelations as divine, and not demonic. But this was in vain: for there was, in the Calvinist's eyes, no such faculty of certification. The mistake of all these figures was to locate the Lydian stone within their own souls: but this, as even the Catholics realized, was to give oneself up to the temptations of the devil. The discourse of discernment, then, was a key frame for the argument between Voetius and Descartes.

But what of the obverse—Descartes's impact on discernment? In negotiating his own path, Voetius sought to sail between the Scylla of Catholicism, and the Charybdis of Descartes: between reliance on the Church, and reliance on private reason. Descartes seemed to clarify for him the dangers at one end of the spectrum of judgment. But this clarity was an illusion. To see in Descartes an over-reliance on private reason, and thus a susceptibility to the devil, marked a failure to understand the intellectual mechanics of the *Meditations*. It was a superficial encounter, with a Descartes characterised by "first principles" and the rejection of books, of the old. But the *Meditations* was in fact full of standard positions, arguments and even examples, even as it reached new results. Descartes would have agreed with Voetius and Schoock: in theory, we cannot exclude the possibility of error: from the senses, or from a demon. *Absolute* discernment is impossible, but in practice we may trust the senses for God prevents systemic error. Descartes even reiterated the defining formula of Aristotelian epistemology: "I easily persuaded myself that I had nothing at all in my mind, which I had not already in my

[64] On Descartes and Augustine, see Geneviève Lewis, *Le problème de l'inconscient et le cartésianisme* (Paris: PUF, 1950), 34–35, and Henri Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et Augustinisme au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1978), 28–31. On the particular significance of Augustine for Voetius, meanwhile, there are a number of articles by Johannes van Oort: "De jonge Voetius en Augustinus," in *De onbekende Voetius: Voordrachten wetenschappelijk symposium, Utrecht, 3 maart 1989*, ed. Van Oort (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), 181–90; idem, "Augustinus, Voetius und die Anfänge der Utrechter Universität," in *Signum Pietatis: Festgabe für Cornelius Petrus Mayer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolar Zumkeller (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), 565–78; idem, "Augustine's Influence on the Preaching of Gisbertus Voetius," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Mélanges T. J. van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning, M. Lamberigts and J. van Houtem, 2 vols. (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1990), 2:997–1009.

senses."[65] What he denied, implicitly but unforgiveably, was the relevance of Scripture to the question.

The categories with which Voetius attacked him, while they made excellent polemic for his colleagues, were still stuck in the familiar critiques of enthusiasm and popery; they struggled to cope with the Cartesian project, and soon ran into self-contradiction. To answer my opening question, then: Descartes's work did have an impact on the *discretio* literature, but it had no impact at all on the answers which that literature reached. Voetius's scholasticism was too inflexible to engage fruitfully with the *Meditations*; in trying to address the new philosophy, he revealed his own conceptual, and in hindsight historical, limitations.

The problem is fundamental: Voetius's synthesis of Calvin and Aristotle functioned as a closed system for analysing phenomena in a theological context. Outside that context, for instance, in the domain of the new metaphysics, it was unintelligible. His comments on *discretio*, as on other subjects, work only as a series of Scriptural glosses, and as a great storehouse of erudition. But the erudition was ill-digested; Schoock himself, long after their bitter falling out, wrote astutely that on one topic Voetius had "collected and heaped up many things after his own fashion—that is, carelessly and without judgment."[66] As a coherent statement on reason, judgment, and discernment, the "De probatione spirituum" is virtually useless.

3. *Voetius after Voetius*

Nonetheless, it became, in Protestant circles, a new point of authority on the discernment of spirits. As late as 1705, a disputation conducted in Leipzig by Johannes Schmidt, on Satan's transformation into an angel of light, cited and recycled Voetius's conclusions.[67] Schmidt's adversary was no longer Descartes but a new danger: Balthasar Bekker who had denied the physical exist-

[65] Descartes, *Meditationes* 6:6, in *Oeuvres*, 7:75. "facile mihi persuadebam nullam plane me habere in intellectu, quam non prius habuissem in sensu."

[66] Marten Schoock, *De sternutatione tractatus copiosus* (Amsterdam, 1664), 153. "Voetius [...] multa quidem more suo, hoc est, negligenter atque citra judicium collegit et coacervavit."

[67] Johannes Schmidt (pr.), Fridericus Ernestus Scholtze (resp.), *Disputatio theologica de* μετασχεματισμω *Satanae in angelum lucis ex II Corinth. XI.14* (Leipzig, 1705), 34–35.

ence of the devil altogether. The world of academic theology was conservative in its answers, even if it directed them at fresh enemies. Outside the university walls, the old conversation about *discretio spirituum*, which had never been much of a conversation at all, did not last long. The conclusion argued on Scriptural grounds by Voetius—that there was no longer any discernment worth the name—was irrelevant to Descartes, as it was to Edward Herbert, and later to Fontenelle and Bekker. An English dialogue of uncertain authorship, published in 1683 but possibly written by Herbert in the 1640s, reframed the problem for the Enlightenment. Speaking of the heathen priests, a student explains to his tutor:

> I should again take the boldness to ask them [...] how yet they could know that God spake them, and whether they were so familiar with the person of that God, as to know him by his Voice, and distinguish him from all others? How they could assure themselves firmly, that it was no inferiour Spirit that gave them this Revelation.[68]

No good answer is given; the implication is sceptical. This was a Cartesian, not a Voetian voice, rejecting the very idea of spiritual revelation. The architects of the new philosophy took no interest in the old scholastic discourse of signs, particular or general, internal or external; they focused instead on the role of the senses in acquiring knowledge. What Voetius queried, they took for granted; what he took for granted, they began to query.

[68] "A Dialogue Concerning Revelations," in C[harles] B[lount], *Religio Laici, Written in a Letter to John Dryden, Esq.*, (London, 1683), 22. The same text can be found in Edward Herbert, *A Dialogue Between a Tutor and his Pupil* (London, 1768), 99. The question of the *Dialogue*'s authorship is vexed; see Julia Griffin, "Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *A Dialogue Between a Tutor and his Pupil*: Some New Questions," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 7 (1998): 162–201.

CHAPTER NINE

"INCORPOREAL SUBSTANCES": DISCERNING ANGELS IN LATER SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

LAURA SANGHA

In 1651, in a chapter in *Leviathan* on "The Signification of Spirit, Angel, and Inspiration in the Books of Holy Scripture," Thomas Hobbes declared that "the universe is the Aggregate of all Bodies." Hobbes also claimed that "there is no real part" of the universe that was not also a body, and that anything that was properly a body was also necessarily part of the aggregate of bodies, the universe.[1] Hobbes's materialism and, in a broader context, the growth of mechanical philosophy and articulated doubt, was to have a profound effect on the relative equilibrium of Protestant attitudes towards angels in later seventeenth-century England. However, our understanding of the effect of these trends has been rapidly changing.

Twenty or thirty years ago, the assumption would probably have been that revolutionary intellectual and philosophical shifts issued a fundamental challenge to Church dogma, as religion and science came into conflict over elementary questions about the nature and functioning of the world.[2] With regard to the supernatural, Keith Thomas was the key proponent of the idea that the late seventeenth century saw the triumph of rationalism. The growth in popularity of the notion that the universe was subject to immutable natural laws "killed the concept of miracles, weakened the belief in the physical efficacy of prayer, and diminished faith in the possibility of direct divine intervention." A newfound faith and optimism about man's reason and practical capability meant that people were no longer willing to accept supernatural explanations for phenomena but

[1] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (London, 1651), 207.

[2] For a chief proponent of the traditional "Scientific Revolution" narrative, see Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Science: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Western Thought 1300–1800* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957).

sought to investigate further, with the expectation of achieving a greater understanding of the workings of the universe.[3] In the context of belief in angels, it would therefore have been expected that the application of reason to theology would create fault lines in the foundations of angelology which, when writ large, had the potential to topple the religious edifice itself. We might therefore be inclined to think that scepticism towards the spiritual made the problem of discernment of spirits irrelevant in later seventeenth-century England, as belief in the supernatural dwindled and earlier debates became obsolete.

But recent historiographical developments have destabilised the assumption that science developed in opposition to theology, and our understanding of the relationship between the two has become increasingly sophisticated, mirroring the relationship itself. The Draper-White thesis, which posited mutual hostility between religion and science, has been overturned by recognition that religious convictions frequently inspired new intellectual enquiries and that empirical investigation did not preclude a belief in the supernatural and invisible world.[4] As one would expect, this changing understanding has important implications for angels. Instead of a weakening and steady decline in belief in these supernatural beings, the evidence suggests that the ideas and expectations of angelology exerted a considerable and creative influence upon the develop-

[3] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*, reprint ed. (London: Penguin, 1991), 769–70, 788–94. Although Thomas acknowledges that the supposed mystical qualities of numbers fostered developments in mathematics, and that interest in astrology brought about new precision in the observation of the heavenly bodies, he downplays such developments. He also suggests that contemporaries would have seen Isaac Newton's secret alchemical investigations as "cranky." Ibid., 770–71.

[4] John Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (London: King, 1876); Andrew White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (London: Macmillan, 1896). For the new understanding, see Marcus Hellyer, ed., *The Scientific Revolution: The Essential Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and its Ambitions, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991); David Goodman and Colin Russell, eds., *The Rise of Scientific Europe, 1500–1800* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991); Margaret J. Osler and Paul Lawrence Farber, eds., *Religion, Science and Worldview: Essays in Honour of Richard S. Westfall* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); Brian Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

ment of modern "science." Far from rendering discernment of spirits obsolete, intellectual shifts not only reignited traditional areas of debate, but also prompted a focus on discernment in rather different contexts. Hobbes's corrosive materialism encouraged stern rebuttals from his contemporaries but also fostered new attempts to grasp the physical characteristics of spirits and to discern if angels were of material or spiritual matter.

In this chapter I will explore in more detail how this process worked. I begin by outlining the central characteristics of Protestant belief in angels, investigating the influence of Reformed theology on Christian angelology and outlining its main characteristics. I will then move on to consider the implications of new intellectual currents for that belief, before exploring the varied responses that these developments provoked. In particular, I will be focusing on those practitioners trying to discern the nature and substance of angels, to illustrate the perhaps unexpected and tangential consequences of new intellectual developments and the rise of materialism. Stuart Clark has shown us that the controversies surrounding the visual identification of apparitions were the occasion for some of the most sustained and sophisticated contemporary discussions of truth and illusion.[5] In the same way, debates on the substance of angels were at the heart of philosophical meditations on the place of material and supernatural substances in the universe. An investigation into these concepts therefore engages with ongoing scholarship on both the nature, and consequences, of scientific development in early modern England.

1. *Angels in Reformation England*

Throughout the Middle Ages people were taught to believe that angels were ministering spirits, provided by God to assist weak-minded and sinful humans in the struggle for salvation. They served many didactic purposes: their familiar figures were the means by which complex ideas about the nature of sin and salvation, and the quality of God's mercy were made more approachable. One of their principal roles was as fellow worshippers alongside mankind,

[5] Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), see esp. ch. 6.

providing humans with an example of the dedication and obedience that each Christian should strive to achieve.

As protectors of mankind angels were thought to defend men from evil in various ways. Angels provided spiritual comfort to beleaguered men, and in the book of Tobit the Archangel Raphael accompanied Tobias on a dangerous journey, fuelling the popular expectation that angels protected travellers. The traditional understanding of the Raphael's Hebrew name as "medicine of god," meant that he was particularly associated with supernatural healing.[6] Angels also released men from prison, comforted the sick, and curbed the assaults of evil angels. The Archangel Michael, in his capacity as the standard bearer of the celestial armies, and in conjunction with his roles of defeating the dragon and casting the fallen angels from heaven, was attributed with a special power to combat evil.[7]

Angels were a prominent presence in the official liturgy relating to death, and they were understood to participate in the cosmic struggle enacted around the deathbed where good and evil angels competed for custody of the dying person's soul.[8] It was commonly thought that angels conveyed the soul of the dead to its final resting place, as they did in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) where the soul of the beggar was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. Their ministry even continued after death, when the Archangel Michael presided over the weighing of individual souls at the Last Judgment, and it was believed that celestial beings would eventually participate in the Apocalypse, as foretold in the Book of Revelation.[9]

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[6] David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 63; Ronald Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: Dent, 1977), 41. Affirming these associations, the mass dedicated to Raphael in the "Use of Sarum" called upon the archangel to help in times of sickness, Frederick Warren, ed., *The Sarum Missal in English*, Part 1 (London: A. Moring Ltd., 1911), 204. These beliefs are also attested to in Jacob de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, vol. 1, trans. William Ryan (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), 208.

[7] See de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 201–11.

[8] See Warren, *The Sarum Missal*, 127, 182, 174–82. Angels are depicted bearing souls to heaven in Caxton's 1483 edition of the *Golden Legend*: *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive, Lombardica historia* [London, 1483], fols. CCLVIIIr, CCCXLVIIv.

[9] For more on angels at the deathbed, see Peter Marshall, "Angels Around the Deathbed: Variation on a Theme in the English Art of Dying," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 83–103.

In the decades after the Reformation, English theologians realigned belief relating to angels in such a way that they could be utilised explicitly as a conduit for Reformed ideas. The principle of justification by faith, allied with the abolition of purgatory, led to the firm denunciation of the idea that angels could act as intercessors between God and men. In the *Institutes*, John Calvin reminded his readers that "it is solely by the intercession of Christ that the ministry of angels extends to us," and this was an attitude that was echoed in works by many English clergymen.[10] Linked to the rejection of their intercessory roles were strident warnings that undue veneration of angels was also forbidden. The worship of angels is referred to as idolatry in the Geneva catechism, which in its 1550 English translation stated that "if we shall haue recourse vnto Aungels or anye other creatures, puttynge any parte of oure confidence or truste in them: we commyte therein damnable Idolatrye."[11] The Scriptural precedent that was often offered in support of these propositions was that God had explicitly warned against offering worship to angels in the book of Revelation, when John fell to the ground in reverence of the angel that appeared to him.[12] This passage was cited by the reformers as proof of their position on idolatry. In the Elizabethan *Homilies*, it is remarked that "when the saint John fell before the angelles feet to worship him, the angel woulde not permit him to do it, but commaunded him that he shoulde worship GOD."[13]

As Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham note in the introduction to their recent collection of essays on celestial beings, "angels had been badly compromised by their collaboration with many of the worst excesses of the late medieval devotional regime."[14] The reformers were worried about what they considered other "superstitious" elements associated with belief about angels. To them, there were various aspects of late medieval angelology that in themselves were "without the express word of God," and these un-

[10] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I.xiv.12.

[11] John Calvin, *The Forme of Common Praiers Vsed in the Churches of Geneua*, trans. William Huycke (London, 1550), sig. S8r.

[12] Revelation 19:10.

[13] [John Jewel], *The Second Tome of Homilies of Such Matters As Were Promised, and Intitules in the Former Part of Homilies* (London, 1571), 244.

[14] Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, eds., introduction to *Angels in the Early Modern World*, 13.

scriptural accretions now came under scrutiny. For example, devotional preoccupation with named archangels, which was in appearance similar to devotion to the saints, caused considerable unease. The separate masses to Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, which appeared in the *Use of Sarum* had no place in Reformed liturgy. Belief in angels was also undermined because much traditional belief about angels was unfortunately either founded upon, or received corroboration from the lives of the saints. In the medieval sermons, angels offer frequent ministry to saints, releasing them from prison and providing spiritual and physical nourishment to imprisoned and persecuted martyrs.[15] Sermon collections such as *The Golden Legend* and *Mirk's Festial* had therefore been important in establishing and disseminating ideas about angels, and many of the common preconceptions about them derived from these compilations.

The rejection of the cult of the saints eliminated this source material for angelic belief, wiping out the foundation for many expectations. Furthermore, because his was the most mature of the angelic cults, and due to his special status as a saint, Michael particularly came under attack. Interestingly, the feast of St Michael and All Angels survived the purge of feast days from the ecclesiastical calendar, but nevertheless the shrine in his honour at St Michael's Mount in Cornwall suffered the same fate as many other religious establishments in the 1530s, being suppressed in 1538.[16] There were also areas of belief where reformers, although not principally opposed to an aspect of belief, were keen to reform it in keeping with the limited Scriptural evidence. The first of these discordant elements was the angelic hierarchy. Traditionally, although not officially verified by the Church, the nine angelic names found in Scripture had been organised into three descending orders, with each angelic order being allocated specific functions.[17] Although reformers were not opposed to the notion of orders of angels in a general sense, they were reluctant to assert anything beyond that, and they poured scorn on the elaborations of the late medieval tradition. Calvin urged his readers to avoid "frivolous questions" in

[15] Voraigne, *The Golden Legend*, 1:86, 106, 225, 316, 317, 322; 2:5, 160, 291.

[16] Alfred L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall: A Portrait of a Society* (London: Cape, 1957), 164, 186.

[17] The names of the hierarchies are: Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones; Dominions, Virtues, Powers; and Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

favour of "solid piety," stating that "those who presume to dogmatise on the ranks and numbers of angels, would do well to consider on what foundation they rest."[18]

A similar area of controversy was the concept of guardian angels. The relevant Scriptural passages were Jesus's blessing of some children whose "angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven," the second the disciples mistaking the newly escaped Peter for "his angel."[19] These could be interpreted as evidence that all humans were assigned a specific guardian angel to watch over them during their lifetime, although, as with the angelic hierarchy, the evidence is by no means explicit. Reformers were divided over the question: Luther appeared to countenance the idea, whereas second generation reformers such as Calvin remained unconvinced, and there were concerns that this belief might prove a temptation to idolatry. Therefore Calvin stated that "I dare not positively affirm" if each believer has a single angel assigned to them. Indeed, those "who limit the care which God takes of each of us to a single angel, do great injury to themselves and to all the members of the Church."[20]

However, despite this theological pruning, angels survived the vicissitudes of the English Reformation and went on to assume a new status in the post-Reformation era. Their initial survival was down to their rock solid biblical credentials—the mainstay of medieval belief about angels was Hebrew and Greek Scripture, which provided countless examples of their existence and endeavour. Angels were part of the Christian world-view: although by no means an unproblematic inheritance from late medieval period, for most reformers, the utility of belief in them far outweighed the more negative associations.

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[18] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.4.

[19] Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:15.

[20] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.7. Calvin also repeated his warning that notions of good and evil angels "as a kind of *genii*" are amongst those aspects of faith that God had not deemed it necessary to elaborate upon, therefore "it is not worthwhile anxiously to investigate a point which does not greatly concern us." It should be noted however that ideas about guardians and hierarchies cannot be used as a litmus test of confessional identity—these were areas that remained ambiguous, and the relative importance placed on them fluctuated along with the religious and political climates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Accordingly, angels were utilised for a wide range of purposes and intents in the post-Reformation era. The preface to communion in the Book of Common Prayer called on the congregation to laud the name of God alongside "angels and archangels," and many religious texts stressed the importance of joining with the angels in prayer.[21] It was also a commonplace of Reformed thought that angels had been provided by a merciful God, "in accommodation to the weakness of our capacity." Bullinger concurred; angels are "an exceeding great token of God's fatherly care and regard towards us. [Through them] he frameth himself so sweetly to our capacities and dispositions."[22] The post-Reformation also placed a greater emphasis on the idea of angels as agents of God's providence, the means by which God's will was carried out on earth. The Danish theologian Niels Hemmingsen, in a sermon translated in 1569 described how God "never dealeth with man by his bare woord," but rather that he would "send angels to give men knowledge of his will," similarly James Calfhill noted that angels "have been by God's providence a defence of the faithful, and overthrow of the wicked."[23]

The initial impact of reform was therefore not entirely "destructive" of older patterns of thought and practice. Although the angelic roles of mediation and intercession were rejected, angels continued to be promoted by reforming clergymen. It was still legitimate to ask God to send his angels to assist men, and the promise of angelic protection and the shared responsibility for worship extended naturally into the post-Reformation era. Angels also retained their roles

[21] Joseph Ketley, ed., "The Book of Common Prayer 1549," in *The Two Liturgies A.D.1549 and A.D.1552 with Other Documents Set Forth by Authority in the Reign of King Edward VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1844), 87, 278, 31, and 221–22. See also William Clay, ed., "The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies in the Church of England," in *Liturgical Services: Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer Set Forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1847), 193.

[22] Heinrich Bullinger, "The Ninth Sermon: Of Good and Evil Spirits," in *The Decades of Henry Bullinger, Minister of the Church of Zurich: The Fourth Decade*, trans. H.I., ed. Thomas Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1851), 339–40.

[23] Niels Hemmingsen, *A Postill, or, Exposition of the Gospels That Are Usually Red in the Churches of God, vpon the Sundayes and Feast Dayes of Saincts*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1569), 382r; James Calfhill, *An Answer to John Martiall's Treatise of the Cross by James Calfhill*, ed. Richard Gibbings (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1846), 199. Alexandra Walsham's work on providence has established the central significance of this concept to early modern Protestant identity: Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

in soteriology and mortuary culture. Thus, they can be seen as one of the traditional constituents of faith that, once fused with new Reformed ideas, formed part of the new Protestant theology. The harmonious representations of angels by these reformers might therefore be described as the "official line" of the Church of England, a reasonably stable concept of heavenly beings firmly rooted in Scripture and in keeping with the aims and outlook of Reformed Christianity.[24] Although there were dissenters to the official attitudes, and despite the undulation of belief about angels in the first century after the onset of reform, a relative equilibrium was reached in Protestant opinions about angels. As has been discussed, absolutely central to this was the notion that speculation on those aspects of angels that were obscure or absent in Scripture was an idle, perhaps even dangerous, pastime. Attempts to discern the substance or essence of angels fell firmly into this category. Reformers were scornful of scholastic attempts to discover whether angels were pure spirits, or whether they could eat, speak, and occupy space.[25] The most that Calvin was willing to countenance was that angels were "real beings possessed of spiritual essence," but like many other reformers he was impatient of "nugatory wisdom" produced by earlier speculations on the topic.[26] The reformers' attitude to questions relating to the substance of angels, as with so many other aspects of Protestant angelology, was characterised by a healthy scepticism.

As I have already indicated, however, in the later seventeenth century new ideas were to have a profound effect on this corpus of belief. They destabilised this consensus, prompting developments in the field of angelology. Hobbes's materialism was the key factor in these changes—contemporaries were quick to see the threat to the Christian worldview implied by his theory, and this refocused atten-

[24] For more on changing attitudes to angels, see Laura Sangha, *Angels and Belief in England 1480–1700* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012); Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010); Joad Raymond, ed., *Conversations with Angels: Essays towards a History of Spiritual Communication, 1100–1700* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Feisal G. Mohamed, *In the Anteroom of Divinity: The Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Marshall and Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World*.

[25] For examples of such enquiries, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* I, q. 50–64, 107–13. Peter Lombard and Bonaventure also considered such metaphysical questions.

[26] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.9, I.xiv.4.

tion on aspects of belief about angels that had lain dormant for decades. In attempting to refute Hobbes's arguments, old debates on the nature and substance of angels were therefore reignited, as they came to new prominence in the religious landscape.

2. *The Threat of Materialism*

Hobbes maintained that there was no part of the universe that was not also a body or a substance. Logically then, to refer to something as an "incorporeal substance," or "incorporeal body" was a contradiction in terms, because the two words "destroy one another."[27] Hobbes's conclusion was in direct opposition to the Christian understanding of angels, which taught that angels were spiritual beings (although spirits might also be combined with some kind of immaterial "matter"). Older understandings were rooted in the Scriptural appearances of angels, but Hobbes rejected these, concluding that where angels were mentioned in the Old Testament, in most instances "Angels were nothing but supernaturall apparitions of the Fancy, raised by the speciall and extraordinary operation of God, thereby to make his presence and commandments known to mankind." In other passages, Hobbes argued that the word angel was merely meant to refer to God himself—this was what was meant by the phrase "the Angel of the Lord" for example, and furthermore the Archangel Michael referred to Christ, and Gabriel to "nothing but a supernaturall phantasme."[28] Despite this seemingly forthright refutation of the existence of angels however, Hobbes did concede that in the New Testament "wherein is no suspicion of corruption of the Scripture," references to angels had extorted from his feeble reason, "an acknowledgment, and beleef, that there be also Angels substantiall, and permanent."[29] Even if angels existed though, Hobbes still insisted that there was no evidence whatsoever that they were "in no place" or "incorporeal," in other words that they consisted, even partially, of a spiritual substance.[30]

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[27] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 207.
[28] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 211–13.
[29] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 214.
[30] For the discussion in full, see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, "Chapter 34: Of the Signification of Spirit, Angel and Inspiration in the Holy Books of Scripture," 207–16.

The potentially corrosive nature of Hobbes's thinking was immediately recognized by his contemporaries. John Bramhall, a Church of Ireland bishop savagely attacked Hobbes in 1658. Bramhall summed up the threat when he stated that "by taking away all incorporeal substances, he [Hobbes] taketh away God himself." Bramhall followed Hobbes's opinions to their logical conclusions. If the phrase "an incorporeal substance" was a oxymoron, then

> to say that an Angel or Spirit, is an incorporeal substance, is to say in effect, that there is no Angel or Spirit at all. By the same reason to say, That God is an incorporeal substance, is to say there is no God at all. Either God is incorporeal, or he is finite, and consists of parts, and consequently is no God [. . .] That there is no incorporeal spirit, is that main root of Atheism, from which so many lesser branches are daily sprouting up.[31]

As far as his critics were concerned, Hobbes's materialism was only a step away from atheism, and as such there was an urgent need to refute his irreligious arguments. The Church of England clergyman Joseph Glanvill prefaced his 1676 essay on "The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion" with the opinion that "*acquaintance* with *Nature* assists *RELIGION* against its greatest enemies, which are *Atheism*, *Sadducism*, *Superstition*, *Enthusiasm*, and the *Humour of Disputing*," before going on to add that one of the main uses of philosophy was to determine "What a *Spirit* is; and whether there be *Spirits*." He argued "that there are *Angels* and *Souls* which are *purer* than these [our] *gross* Bodies," and that by his method of proving the existence of angels and spirits "a very considerable service is done to Religion: For hereby our Notion of the adorable *Deity* is freed from all *material* grossness."[32] George Sinclair, who was a natural philosopher, university professor and engineer at different stages of his varied career, in 1685 produced a collection entitled *A Choice Collection of Modern Relations Proving evidently against the Saducees and Atheists*.[33]

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[31] John Bramhall, *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes His Last Animadversions, in the Case concerning Liberty, and Universal Necessity, With an Appendix concerning the Catching of Leviathan or, the Great Whale* (London, 1658), 471–72.

[32] Joseph Glanvill, "The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion," in *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London, 1676), 6–9. Italics in original.

[33] John Anderson, "Sinclair, George (*d.* 1696?)," rev. Anita McConnell, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004–) [henceforth *DNB*], http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/ article/25615.

He pondered in his introduction "what can be the reason of so much *Atheism* in the World?" and his considered opinion was that there were two reasons for it. The first was "a monstrous rable of men, who following the *Hobbesian* and *Spinosian* Principles, slight Religion, and undervalue the Scripture, because there is such an express mention of Spirits and Angels in it, which their thick and plumbeous capacities cannot conceive." The second was "the absurd Principles of the *Cartesian Philosophy*," which did not directly deny the existence of God, but seemed to prove much "which is Connatural to all men." His work was intended to counter these claims, and amongst other things, to affirm "what marvellous works have been performed by Angels."[34]

Anxieties about irreligion and atheism were of course not a new phenomenon in post-Reformation England. Michael Hunter has demonstrated that the inclusive concept of "atheism" encapsulated a range of threatening phenomena that were sensationalised into "a single, pervasive stereotype" that could serve "descriptive and prescriptive functions" and colour contemporary perceptions.[35] Although John Spurr has since demonstrated that in the Restoration Church this stereotype was being sub-divided into more distinct categories of atheists, deists and Socinians, the individuals in these categories were assumed to have in common a sinful and debased nature as the ultimate source of their scepticism. The evidence suggests that there was indeed a tendency for mechanical philosophers to be lumped together under the labels of "atheism" and "irreligion": those "free-thinkers" who questioned Scripture, who espoused a preference for natural over supernatural explanations and who denied the immortality of the soul. Hobbes and his colleagues were presumed to embody all of these characteristics. The vulnerability of the Restoration Church, which Spurr argues was

[34] George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered, or, a Choice Collection of Modern Relations Proving Evidently against the Saducees and Atheists of This Present Age* (Edinburgh, 1685), sig. A5r, A6v. Italics in original. William Jameson was another university teacher who felt "besieg'd by nominal Theists but real Atheists who ridicule God's Sacred Word as the product of Rogues or Sots, and explode the Doctrine of the Existence of Angels and Spirits, and consequently of the Beeing of God the Father of Spirits, as the Dream of some Brainsick Weaklings." William Jameson, *Nazianzeni Querela et Votum Justum: The Fundamentals of the Hierarchy Examin'd and Disprov'd* (Glasgow, 1697), sig. **2v.

[35] Michael Hunter, "The Problem of Atheism in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 35 (1985): 135–57.

greatly undermined by "the deficiencies of the clergy, the weakness of her discipline, and the religious diversity of English society," no doubt made anxieties about irreligion particularly acute. Furthermore, the susceptibility of the Church was exacerbated by the spirit of an age "given over to the pleasure of wit, the exercise of reason, the jeering of anticlericalism, and the self-indulgence of libertinism."[36] In this context, it is not hard to see why anxieties about atheism were especially prominent, and why there was such pressing concern amongst churchmen to combat these developments when they arose.

Thus far, the responses that I have examined appear to support the notion that intellectual shifts arose in opposition to, and eventually triumphed over, theology. However, it is hardly the case that Hobbesian materialism determined all current philosophical or even scientific discourse, and this in itself disrupts the teleological underpinning of the argument. The tendency of contemporaries to collapse new philosophical ideas into one category of "irreligion" or "atheism" has also obscured the more nuanced nature of the controversy surrounding these questions, and draws attention away from the fact that religious convictions stimulated, and had a creative influence over the development of these discussions.

The reality was that Thomas Hobbes differed from many of his contemporaries in that he sought to explain even the human soul and social processes in terms of matter and motion alone. Other developments in natural philosophy diverged from his thought substantially. The mechanical philosophy of Pierre Gassendi purported that whilst animals had corporal souls, the human soul was incorporeal; while Descartes's distinction between *res extensa* (the physical world) and *res cogitans* (the thinking being) created a boundary that fell along similar lines. Those authors that were attacked by contemporaries for their materialistic principles held far

[36] John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England* (London: Yale UP, 1991), 219, 249–69. For further discussion, see David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell* (London: Routledge, 1988), Section 2, 48–70; Gerald E. Aylmer, "Unbelief in Seventh-Century England," in *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill*, ed. Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 22–46. Aylmer notes that Hobbes was treated as "an actual or virtual atheist," and documents the appearance of "a new series of more coherent and sophisticated anti-atheistical treatises" from 1652 onwards. Ibid., 36–37.

from straight-forward opinions about the nature of spirit. John Webster, a schoolmaster and polemicist whose scepticism was strongly condemned by his colleagues, in reality carefully nuanced his arguments about angels. Although maintaining that "good and bad Spirits have most certainly an Existence," he also thought that if the angelical nature was simply spiritual and incorporeal, they would be "of the same essential identity with God." Since this was impossible, the substance of angels must be something else, and it was likely to be "a truly compound Being consisting of soul and body," as the Cambridge Platonist Henry More had argued.[37]

The controversy stirred up by Hobbes not only involved an outright rejection of his views, it also stimulated a tangential reignition of old debates on the nature and essence of angels that had been left behind following the reconfiguring of angelology after the Reformation. Christian theologians from the early days of the Church had been fascinated by the metaphysical and philosophical aspects of Scriptural angels and they explored their mysteries tenaciously. In the thirteenth century, the university formalised the professional study of angels, and the scholastics subsequently constructed an angelology that included perplexing and searching questions about their essence and existence. This science of angels attempted to discern whether they were pure spirits, or whether their essence also implied some sort of material substance. It questioned if angels were able to occupy space, and tried to unravel what happened when angels assumed bodies. Interestingly, the answers given to such enquiries were varied: Thomas Aquinas and other Dominicans regarded angels as pure spirit, while the Franciscan tradition, in line with many of the early Fathers, argued for some form of incorporeal or spiritual matter in composition with spirit.[38]

During and after the Reformation, Protestant theologians endeavoured to reshape this inheritance, and in doing so they shifted the priorities of angelology. In his discussion of angels in the *Institutes*, Calvin's emphasis was that angels were representatives of God's glory and continuing care for his people. Calvin stressed that "heavenly spirits" should be used for the purposes of edification,

[37] John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft Wherein Is Affirmed That There Are Many Sorts of Deceivers and Impostors* (London, 1677), 38–39, 42, 105, 209.

[38] For more on the development of early angelology, see Keck, *Angels and Angelology*, esp. chs. 4 and 5.

and that meditations on them should be in a spirit of "solid piety" and "true faith," not in "curiosity, or in studying things in no use." But as we saw above, he also called on people to "renounce those vain babblings of idle men, concerning the nature, ranks, and number of angels," although he also condemned the opinions of the Sadducees that angels were merely manifestations of God's power as a "dream," and "gross ignorance" that was contradicted by many passages of Scripture.[39]

Calvin's warning that more "obscure matters" concerning angels should be left alone, and the minimalist style of his angelology, is echoed in many other writings. Throughout the sixteenth century, reformers re-emphasized certain angelic characteristics that underpinned the Reformed mentality and sanctioned their perception of the spiritual universe. Their pastoral and didactic functions were the main area of concern for Protestant authors, not metaphysical meditations on the nature and substance of their essence. But following the publication of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, these older debates sprang back to life, and meditation on the essence of angels came to occupy a new place in Reformed theology. Discussions on the nature of angels, which previously had been passed over quickly with little remark, were extended and elaborated upon.

Authors were quick to jump on what they perceived as errors in Hobbes—for example William Lucy, the Arminian bishop of Saint David's, argued in 1663, in a work written specifically to confute Hobbesian ideas, that angels "have a composition in their essence" and that "their actual understanding is an act."[40] Other works designed to refute Hobbes's theories also rebutted his claims about angels—John Whitehall in *The Leviathan Found Out* wrote that "'tis more probable and agreeable to the opinion of the generality of the World" that angels assumed bodies on occasion, as opposed to Hobbes's claim that "are substantial and permanent." Whitehall also disputed Hobbes's argument that fallen angels had to have bodies in order that eternal hell-fire could have an effect on them. Whitehall remarked that taken to its logical conclusion this would mean that God was incapable of making "any other sort of fire that can work

[39] Calvin, *Institutes* I.xiv.3–12.

[40] William Lucy, *Observations, Censures, and Confutations of Notorious Errours in Mr. Hobbes His Leviathan and Other His Bookes* (London, 1663), 407; see also ibid., 71, 279, 404.

upon something not a body." Whitehall scathingly concluded: "Mr. Hobbes might as well have said, that if we never had had any fire, God could not have made such a thing as fire."[41]

Other discussions of the nature of angels were less polemical, but although there was no specific reference to Hobbesian thought within them, it seems likely that interest in the topic was rekindled by the assertions of the mechanical philosophers. Most reiterated that angels were spiritual substances, although some thought (with the scholastics) that they also consisted of some sort of spiritual matter. In 1663 the physician Gideon Harvey noted that "Angels are constituted by their Forms without Matter, and for that reason are nominated immaterial."[42] Others discussed the angelic nature at greater length. Edward Polhill, a religious controversialist who specialised in practical Reformed theology, wrote of the three ranks of beings in existence—the spiritual, material and mixed—and stated that "Angels by Office" belonged to the first, which was the intellectual world. All spiritual beings were not equal however, as Polhill went on to say that compared to God, angels are but "nullities [...] in comparison of his Immortality Angels are but smoak."[43] The Leicestershire clergyman Benjamin Camfield was particularly effusive on the topic, insisting that they were not "notions only, Creatures of our brain, Chimera's of our fansie," but that they were "true, personal and permanent Subsistences, that have of themselves a real, perfect, and actual Being." He also returned to the topic in a section on the nature of spirits, who he defined as "an incorporeal or bodyless Being, endued with understanding, will, and active power," in opposition to "whatever incompossibility, jargon

[41] John Whitehall, *The Leviathan Found Out* (London, 1679), 104–6.

[42] Gideon Harvey, *Archelogia Philosophica Nova, or, New Principles of Philosophy* (London, 1663), 6. For similar sentiments, see also the physician and apothecary William Drage, *Daimonomageia: A Small Treatise of Sicknesses and Diseases from Witchcraft, and Supernatural Causes* (London, 1665), 26–27, who declared that "what is said of Angels, is referable to all Spirits, for all Angels are spirits, but all Spirits are not Angels"; and the respected physician and author Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici: Observations upon Religio Medici* (London, 1682), 77, 208, who declared that the immaterial world was the habitation of angels, describing them as "incorporeal substances."

[43] Edward Polhill, *The Divine Will Considered in Its Eternal Decrees, and Holy Execution of Them* (London, 1695), 132, 144–45.

or non-sense some haughty scorners have talked of, in the Notion of an immaterial or incorporeal substance."[44]

Hobbes's materialism should not therefore be judged as wholly destructive of religion, and its capacity to stimulate investigation in the philosophical sphere and to promote discussion of the essence of, and interaction between, body and spirit should be recognized. Contemporaries, although overwhelmingly hostile to his materialism, were spurred to sophisticated engagement with these concepts. What is more, the development of mechanical philosophy also seems to have contributed to a more proactive, and empirical approach to proving the existence of the spiritual realm. In the final part of this chapter, I will explore this innovative approach in more detail.

3. *The Search for Empirical Proofs*

As we have seen, the threat to Christian belief posed by questioning the existence of the supernatural provoked many English Protestant divines into a defence of their systems of belief, an intention they made explicit in the introductions and prefaces that they provided to their works. Alongside the natural philosophers and clergymen who sought to refute those aspects of the new thinking that they perceived as dangerous to traditional Christian theology, there were also those who adopted experimental methods and turned the weapons of mechanical philosophy against their advocates. Historians have recognized this process: recently Euan Cameron has discussed the techniques adopted by the "anti-Saducists" in his study of superstition in Europe, finding that these late seventeenth-century authors rejected both medieval and early modern discourse on the subject in the name of empirical principles.[45] Barbara Shapiro has maintained that natural philosophy could provide support for religion, countering the threats posed by atheism and Hobbism by

[44] Benjamin Camfield, *A Theological Discourse of Angels and Their Ministries Wherein Their Existence, Nature, Number, Order and Offices Are Modestly Treated Of* (London, 1678), 4, 13.

[45] Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), chs. 16 and 17. Cameron describes the resulting scholarship as "a strange new brew of Neoplatonism, astrology, chemical speculation, empiricism, or even a complete lack of theoretical principles." Ibid., 284.

providing proofs for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. In contrast to the small minority of radical intellectual thinkers that were challenging received wisdom, other men sought to find empirical evidence of the existence of the spirit world.[46]

Angels were an exceptionally useful tool in this respect as they were also representative of the workings of God's providence in the world, their benevolent presence signifying an interventionist God at odds with the distant deity of mechanical philosophy. In *A Theological Discourse of Angels* in 1678, Benjamin Camfield insisted that his subject was but

> too suitable to that Atheistical and degenerate Age we live in, wherein the general disbelief of Spirits [...] may well be thought the ground and introduction of all that irreligion and profaneness, which naturally enough follows upon it.[47]

Camfield thought that it was the devil that promoted this kind of infidelity, and that caused men "to laugh at the Tales of immaterial substances," but it was his intention to "represent everything according to its proper evidence," so that people might recognize the "good turns" and "admirable virtues" of these creatures. In the future, men would then be less "profane, sceptical, and indifferent in our belief, esteem, thoughts and speeches about them."[48] A number of leading clergymen therefore followed Camfield, and collected information and stories relating to the angelic ministry towards mankind, and published these as empirical proof of the angels' existence and responsibilities.[49]

Among the first to do so was Joseph Hall, bishop of Norwich, who in 1659 published *The Invisible World Discovered to Spirituall Eyes,* which is a revealing example of how divines might undertake this task. Hall began by lamenting that he had "been slack in returning

[46] Barbara Shapiro, "Natural philosophy and political periodisation: interregnum, restoration and revolution," in *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration*, ed. Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 299–327. See also John Spurr, "'Rational Religion' in Restoration England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 4 (1998): 563–85.

[47] Camfield, *A Theological Discourse,* sig. A4v.

[48] Camfield, *A Theological Discourse*, sig. A4v, A5v–r.

[49] Alexandra Walsham has noted the "more strident" tone of publications, as well as the clustering of reported visions of angels in the later Stuart period in: Alexandra Walsham, "Invisible Helpers: Angelic Intervention in Post-Reformation England," *Past and Present* 208 (2010): 120–29.

praises to my God, for the continual assistance of those blessed and beneficient spirits," before going on to acknowledge the infinite number of angels that were provided though the "bountiful provision of the Almighty." In a section entitled "The apparitions of Angels," Hall then considered a range of reports of angels appearing in latter days. Hall maintained that apparitions of angels were now very rare, though "some few instances our times have been known to yield."[50] It was his opinion that the "trade" people had with spirits was now only spiritual, and that there were many times "insensible helps" from them, though they remained unseen. The miraculous cure of a cripple at St Madron's well in Cornwall was such a case—Hall himself had taken "a strict and personall examination" of the man who had been unable to walk for sixteen years, and he was apparently convinced that his restoration was bought about by an "Author invisible." Hall referred to the tale of a pastor of Northeuse, John Spangenberge, who no sooner had stepped out of his house "then the house fell right down in the place," and he suggested to his readers that they might also be able to recall occasions when people they were acquainted with "have faln from very high towers, and into deep pits, past the naturall possibility of hope, who yet have been preserved not from death only, but from hurt: whence could these things be, but by the secret aid of those invisible helpers?"[51]

Although Hall did go on to say that the main care of angels was their ministry to the soul, where they were responsible for "enlightening the understanding" and "incouraging our weaknesse," he was evidently convinced of the reality of their intervention in the world.[52] Furthermore, he was able to corroborate this through the testimony of no less a witness than Philip Melanchthon. Hall related the tale of Simon Grynaeus, a prominent reformer who had offended a preacher in the city of Speyer by accusing him of teaching popish doctrines. Whilst eating dinner with Melanchthon in his lodgings, the latter was called out of the room to speak with a stranger, "a grave old man of goodly countenance, seemly, and richly attired." The old man warned Melanchthon that the preacher had reported Grynaeus, and that officers would soon arrive at the lodg-

[50] Hall, *The Invisible World*, 59.
[51] Hall, *The Invisible World*, 64–65.
[52] Hall, *The Invisible World*, 66.

ings to carry him to prison. Grynaeus quickly made his escape on the Rhine, just before the authorities arrived. Hall had taken the tale from Melanchthon's own Commentary on Daniel, where "he acknowledges Gods fatherly providence in sending this Angell of his, for the rescue of his faithful servant."[53]

It is immediately apparent that Bishop Hall's work represents a new development in the Protestant treatment of angels. Officially, formal Protestant theology insisted that angels no longer appeared to men. Although in the early Christian era God had employed angels to reveal his will as a concession to the weakness and frailty of mankind, by the sixteenth century they were to be "discerned by faith, not by eye-sight." Alexandra Walsham has recently demonstrated that the logical consequence of this was that all non-Scriptural or patristic examples of angelic apparitions were either popish tricks, hallucinations or cases of demonic deception. In combination with intense anxiety over idolatry, and Reformed Protestantism's profound distrust of the eye as a means of divine communication, clergymen argued that visual manifestations of good angels were not what they seemed, and in most cases they were discerned to be the result of demonic delusion.[54]

Prior to this, although many authors were insistent that angels played an active part in the world, it was highly unusual for them to single out the specific occasions when this was thought to have happened. Most were content with documenting the Scriptural examples of angelic inspiration and discussing their ministration and responsibilities in this context. Hall's distinct approach can therefore be linked directly to the concerns about atheism and irreligion that I have been discussing—in attempting to refute the unbelief of the age he was willing to go further than his predecessors in insisting upon their involvement in earthly affairs. There was a need to prove angelic intervention in the world because this provided the evidence on which to base a belief in angels, combining the incontrovertible proof of Scripture with the experimental evidence of respected Protestant authorities.

Benjamin Camfield also began his treatise by discussing Scriptural appearances of angels and their responsibilities to mankind whilst acknowledging that "their doctrinal ministry is not, ordinari-

[53] Hall, *The Invisible World*, 59–62.
[54] Walsham, "Invisible Helpers," *passim*.

ly, now to be expected by us." He then gave some examples of occasions when good men "have owed their safety and preservation from impendent evils and ruine to the particular warning of Angels." He discussed at length "an Holy and Pious Man [...] and Acquaintance of Bodinus," who had "a certain Spirit that did perpetually accompany him," describing how the angel "by striking his right Ear" would admonish him when he did anything amiss.[55] By the same means of communication the angel would also indicate the character of the people whom the man met with, or indicate "if he was about to eat or drink anything that would hurt him" so that he "was presently raised and strengthened with a spiritual and supernatural Power."[56] Camfield also related the tale of the Chancellor of Navarre, Monsieur Calignon, who "one Night as he was asleep he heard a voice." After waking him three times the voice "advised him by all means to retire speedily out of that Town with his Family," for it was about to be visited by the plague, by which means Calignon had a lucky escape. Camfield had taken the tale from Moses Amyraldus, who concluded that this "was certainly an Angel, that spake to him, and by the favourable and benign Providence of God drew him out of that danger."[57]

It is significant that Camfield prefaced his more recent examples of angelic activity by admitting that although God "may still imploy the holy Angels upon certain Messages, Admonitions, and Instructions [...] the way of Salvation is already prescribed to us." Camfield's concern was that people might deliberately seek out the assistance of angels, leaving them open to "Diabolical delusions pretending to be Angelical and Divine Revelations," and he warned his readers "that a good Angel, an Angel of Light, can never come unto us upon any errand contrary to the revealed Word and Will of God by Jesus Christ, whom they all adore and worship."[58] George Sinclair exhibited a similar preoccupation with the problem of discerning spirits, reminding his readers that "the Devil can counterfeit what *Religion* he pleases," taking the form of "an Angel of Light" in order

[55] Jean Bodin's acquaintance is usually understood as Bodin himself, see Robin Briggs, "Dubious Messengers: Bodin's Daemon, the Spirit World and the Sadducees," in Marshall and Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World*, 168–90.

[56] Camfield, *A Theological Discourse*, 78–80, 87–89, 90–91.

[57] Camfield, *A Theological Discourse*, 90–91.

[58] Camfield, *A Theological Discourse,* 83–84.

to achieve his ends.[59] These cautionary words are further evidence that reason and articulated doubt were yet to overwhelm traditional concerns about discernment. The threat from atheism and mechanical philosophy had certainly caused alarm, but it had not yet eclipsed persistent areas of controversy and anxiety relating to belief about angels.[60]

4. *Conclusion*

Endeavours to collect together experimental evidence of the existence of angels and the supernatural world were a reaction to the perceived threat of irreligion and atheism, and they were fuelled by controversies arising from broader intellectual shifts. They are a reminder that the importance of exceptional thinkers should not be exaggerated in light of what we now know about future developments. The names of the great philosophers and the most important protagonists of the "Scientific Revolution" are well known to students of history in the twenty-first century, and the eventual significance of their activities is a familiar narrative. However, at the end of the seventeenth century these men were still a minority, and they were often considered radical or heretical by the majority of their contemporaries.[61] As has been shown, a much more common position was that held by many of the intellectuals that were the authors of these collections of apparition narratives—the "scientists" of the day. They employed the experimental method to

[59] Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*, 240. Italics in original.

[60] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681); Richard Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691). Other clergymen produced works in a similar vein to Hall and Camfield. Joseph Glanvill offered a series of impeccably attested accounts of supernatural intervention in the posthumously published *Saducismus Triumphatus*; the Presbyterian Richard Baxter related similar tales in the *Certainty of the World of Spirits* in 1681; and the Sussex minister William Turner published a massive collection "against the abounding Atheism of this Age" in 1697, William Turner, *Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences, Both of Judgment and Mercy* (London, 1697).

[61] Michael Hunter, "Founder members of the Royal Society (*act.* 1660–1663)," *DNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/59221. Hobbes, to his chagrin, was never invited to join the Royal Society because he was seen as too much of a liability by the existing members, and the reaction against his ideas in print is further evidence that the opinions of these thinkers were not shared by the majority of the country.

prove the existence of the spirit world and their studies investigated a number of fields, ranging from metaphysics to astrology. The evidence does not suggest that the rise of rationality utterly destroyed belief in angels; rather, critics took up the weapon of reason "to fortify and strengthen the Faith of others"—and their dissenting voices should not be left out of the narrative of change in this period.[62] Scepticism did not automatically weaken or eliminate concerns about discernment of spirits, but rather new intellectual trends allowed discernment to take on *additional* meanings in later seventeenth-century England.

Finally, this discussion also has implications for ongoing debates about the emergence of a "rational" mind-set and of a modern "secular" mentality. Alexandra Walsham has recently suggested that thinking in terms of "cycles of desacrilisation and resacrilisation" may help to counteract the past tendency in the scholarship for a narrative that emphasizes a linear progression of development from superstition to secularisation.[63] The idea of a "partial re-enchantment of the world" in the later-seventeenth century is held out by an examination of angels during the period. The trend to revisit past debates that had supposedly been extinguished by the Reformation and the tendency of reformers to go further than any of their predecessors in asserting the reality of interaction between the natural and supernatural worlds both suggest that desacrilisation is not as closely tied to the development of Protestantism as has often been assumed. It also demonstrates that the "religion" which science is often held to evolve into conflict with, is not static or passive but a dynamic process that could also contribute to, affirm, and inspire "scientific" theory and methodology. Closer attention to the tangential, the contradictory, and the dissenting voices of the age reveal a fresh receptiveness to the supernatural and sacred that does not contradict but complements our understanding of progress and change in the later seventeenth century.

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[62] Henry More, *An Antidote against Atheisme*, 164.

[63] Alexandra Walsham, "Historiographical Reviews: The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528.

AFTERWORD

ANGELS OF LIGHT AND IMAGES OF SANCTITY

STUART CLARK

In what Heinrich Bullinger called "few but plain words," 2 Corinthians 11:13–14 addressed one of the more complex and troubling implications of early Christian demonology: it was no wonder, warned the text, if the apostleship of the Church was threatened by imposters, "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."[1] Commenting on this, Erasmus declared that there was "no other device by which even Satan himself, dark as he is, more effectively harms mortals than by hiding his real form."[2] This was one of the notions that came to pervade early modern religion, preoccupied as it was with the genuine and the fake and the demonizing of disagreement. One can only imagine the vastness of its metaphorical use to explain and condemn the disguising of immorality and sin. All kinds of transgressions within churches and differences between them could be embraced by the idea of pretence in the ministry of Christ. False apostles, pseudo-prophets, the Antichrist—the counterfeit and the spurious were enemies everywhere. In his commentary on the passage, Calvin applied it to the papacy, as did the Lutheran Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) in Denmark; in the Spanish Netherlands, the English Catholic Thomas Stapleton (1535–98) applied it to Protestant heresy.[3] The Calvinist Biblical commentator Wolfgang

[1] Heinrich Bullinger, *In posteriorem D. Pauli ad Corinthos epistolam [. . .] commentarius* (Zurich, 1535), 106r. I have used the 1611 version of the Bible, substituting modern spellings. "paucis sed evidentibus verbis."

[2] Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrases on the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974–), vol. 43 (2009), ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. and annot. Mechtilde O'Mara and Edward A. Phillips Jr., 268.

[3] Jean Calvin, *A Commentarie upon S. Paules Epistles to the Corinthians*, trans. Thomas Timme (London, 1577), 288v–89r; Niels Hemmingsen, *Commentaria in omnes epistolas apostolorum* (Copenhagen, 1586), 299; Thomas Stapleton, *Antidota apostolica*

Musculus (1497–1563) went so far as to blame the "angel of light" in Corinthians for all the errors, impieties, superstitions, false cults, and idolomany that had marred the history of the Church.[4]

Yet there was a need for interpretation of a more literal kind too. As Euan Cameron reminds us at the outset of this volume, Christianity's accommodation with the world of spirits resulted in the confining of angels, good and bad, to the natural order, where their actual power was limited to (ultimately) natural causes. Demonic pretence was not just a threat of a generalised moral and pastoral kind: it was activated through the processes that regulated the natural world, the human body, and, in so far as its faculties were phys-physiologically grounded, the human brain itself. The "sensible soul," in particular, functioned organically, with the consequence that both the outer and inner senses and, crucially, the imagination could all be demonically manipulated by physical means—in effect, by control over the transmission of visible (and other) *species* on their journey from the world of sensible objects into and through the brain. An "angel of light" was thus not merely symbolically deceitful—actual simulation was also likely. Early modern commentaries on 2 Cor. 11:13–14 reflect this. Bullinger applied the verses to the serpent, who appeared and spoke to Eve, and to the visitations from "angels" about which there was so much monastic "chatter."[5] On the word "transformed," the professor of Scripture at Leuven, Libert Froidmont (Fromondus; 1587–1653), glossed that Satan "moved" the imaginations and desires of men "sometimes visibly in dreams or when awake"—in effect, by a *local* motion.[6] The most celebrated biblical exegete of the Catholic Reformation was the Flemish Jesuit Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637), professor of the subject at Leuven and Rome. His commentary on verse 14 briefly considers the symbolisms of light and darkness, which Satan seeks to transmute either by appearing visibly to men's eyes or insinuating his counsels into their imaginations. But the rest of the exegesis

contra nostri temporis haereses: In posteriorem B. Pauli epistolam ad Corinthios, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Antwerp, 1598), 255–57.

[4] Wolfgang Musculus, *In apostoli Pauli ambas epistolas ad Corinthos commentarii* (Basel, n. d.), 458–59.

[5] Bullinger, loc. cit. (note 1).

[6] Libertus Fromondus, *Commentaria in Sacram Scripturam* (Rouen, 1709), 162. "Aliquando visibiliter in somnio, aut vigilia movendo hominis imaginationem, et concupiscentiam."

consists entirely of examples of the visible appearances of demons as good angels or as Christ himself to individual saints and monks—a list which includes Abraham, Simeon Stylites, and Pachomius, and the monks Heron and Valens. To the latter, according to Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca*, the devil pretended to be Christ accompanied by a thousand angels. The monk duly worshipped the apparition and then announced to his brethren that he had no need to take communion "for I have seen Christ today."[7] Well into the seventeenth century, the chatter of monks was evidently still capable of sustaining authoritative Catholic scholarship on this text.

Nor was the true identity of a suspect spiritual presence always resolved in one direction—that is, by determining that pseudo-"angels" and "Christs" were in fact demons. We should reflect on the association of ideas that sends Froidmont from 2 Cor. 11:14 (specifically the words: "is transformed") not just to 1 Cor. 12:10 (on the gift of *discretio spirituum*) but to Matthew 14:26–28, where the disciple Peter had to ask for a sign from Christ to show that walking on water did not make him a "spirit." Despite the equivalence—or perhaps because of it—there does seem to be a different kind of religious charge when deciding that a false Christ is a demon and when deciding that the real Christ is not.

1. *Angels of Light*

If this kind of ambiguity was such a defining attribute of spiritual beings, discernment was supposed to remove it: "believe not every spirit but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). With false ministry again as its immediate inspiration, discernment too had enormous extension as a generalised religious ideal. We have seen in Anthony Ossa-Richardson's essay how its questions were ultimately philosophical in nature and, therefore, easily extended from the spiritual to everything else. To an extent, the "spirits" to be discerned were more like spiritual dispositions and movements of the

[7] Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in omnas divi Pauli epistolas* (Antwerp, 1692), 397. "Ego non opus habeo communione: Christum enim vidi hodie." A Lapide does add the detail that the other monks then threw Valens into irons. On this episode, see David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), 138–39.

soul than beings or visible entities. The Cistercian scholar and, from 1669, Cardinal, Giovanni Bona (1609–1674), explained that *discretio spirituum* dealt with any kind of incitement to believe or act whose goodness was not apparent and where an evil outcome was to be feared. This could apply to any attempts at extraordinary or superstitious deeds—even miracles—or just efforts to be perfect, which often troubled the pious.[8] The crucial issue was the difficulty of distinguishing between morally different motivations and actions which the deceptions of human nature and demonic interference made it difficult to tell apart. Embracing the authentication of many contested forms of religious life, discernment came to encapsulate the issue of religious authenticity itself.

Here too, however, the issues tended to arise most frequently in connection with the concrete, the particular, and, above all, the visual. In this volume, we have been presented with typical examples. In Italy, a young Florentine woman in a convent undergoes extraordinary visions and other mystical experiences described in visual terms, is concerned about their demonic inspiration and, potentially at least, a candidate for strict inquisitorial inquiry. In Bohemia, a chiliastic prophet predicts the arrival of the millennium, partly on the basis of godly visions, and when this fails to happen becomes a "false prophet," able to acknowledge that his own visions had been corrupted by Satan and that those of others like him "might just as easily" have been demonic. In Restoration England, philosophers and theologians collected empirical evidence for the existence of good and evil angels and the reality of their intervention in human affairs in the form of "apparition narratives," thereby making discernment a continuing pastoral necessity even for Protestants sceptical of its Catholic associations. Most famously of all, two Spanish Carmelites, a nun and a friar, become expert discerners of their own and others' visions and make the exercise central to their accounts of spirituality. Finally, a spiritual adviser to Benedictine nuns in the Catholic Netherlands devotes a series of voluminous writings to the nature of internal prayer and the dangers posed to some of its imagistic forms by "angels of light."

The multiplying of episodes, debates, and writings like these through the centuries of religious reformation made discernment

[8] Giovanni Bona, *De discretio spirituum*, in *Opera omnia* (Antwerp, 1677), 228–29.

one of the principal investigatory idioms of the age. The investigators, in practice or in print, were of every kind: priests and ministers, confessors and advisers, inquisitors, exorcists, canonization experts, and, of course, theologians. What they investigated was varied too: not just specific visions and apparitions but the allied subjects of revelatory ecstasies, raptures, and dreams, entire fields like pneumatology and demonology (notably demonic possession), the boundaries of the miracle, and the criteria and procedures for establishing true sanctity. But through it all ran the challenge of 2 Cor. 11:13–14: how to identify a truth when the false version was indistinguishable from it? How were Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and her colleagues to know that she was not physically possessed by an "angel of light"? How could seventeenth-century English dream theorists tell divine dreams from their demonic counterparts if spirits of both kinds manipulated the mental events of which they were composed? How could Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross interpret visions without employing the usual categories of the visual process? And how could Augustine Baker devise tests for the veracity of a prayer mode that was internal and "affective"—or, indeed, for any mystical practice—when none that pre-empted the devil seemed possible? These were questions essentially about human perception and cognitive experience. It was Cardinal Bona's view that when *discretio spirituum* was explored to its fullest it embraced "the whole economy of the external and internal senses."[9]

Ironically, discernment was ill-equipped for this imposing epistemological task. Its twin theoretical foundations exposed it to weaknesses and contradictions even before it could begin. On the one hand, it depended uncritically on a wholly traditional faculty psychology that saw the human chain of cognition as a natural process and made *species* the natural signs of their objects (hence, Descartes's indifference to its fortunes). This largely Aristotelian model delivered mental images of the world that successfully copied reality under optimum natural conditions but, at the same time, left them completely exposed to demons using their command of local motion to subvert those very conditions. Not just the Pauline epistles but the whole weight of an endlessly reiterated Thomistic demonology gave Satan the powers to create (what Aquinas had

[9] Bona, *De discretione spirituum*, 258. "tota sensuum externorum et internorum oeconomia."

called) the "semblance" of reality, vitiating in advance any idea that the organs of sense could discern anything at all. But discernment theology's other intellectual debt was to Augustine and he was no more helpful. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he provided most of its exponents (though not all) with a three-fold account of ways of seeing:

> When we read this one commandment, *You shall love your neighbo[u]r as yourself*, we experience three kinds of vision: one through the eyes, by which we see the letters; a second through the spirit, by which we think of our neighbo[u]r even when he is absent; and a third through an intuition of the mind, by which we see and understand love itself.[10]

This was a scheme that also stressed the errors and deceptions that plagued both the eyes (corporeal vision) and the "spirit" (by which Augustine meant the imagination), including those wrought by demons. Discernment at these lower levels was not an issue when demons acted in manifestly demonic ways, but, again, virtually impossible as a sense-based activity when they acted as "angels of light":

> The discernment of these experiences is certainly a most difficult task when the evil spirit acts in a seemingly peaceful manner and, without tormenting the body, possesses a man's spirit and says what he is able, sometimes even speaking the truth and disclosing useful knowledge of the future. In this case he transforms himself [...] as if into an angel of light [...] This spirit [...] cannot be recognized except by that gift mentioned by St Paul, where he speaks of the different gifts of God: *. . . to another the distinguishing of spirits.*[11]

True discernment—*discretio* properly so called—was indeed a charism, having nothing to do with distinguishing between equivalent sensory phenomena on epistemological grounds. Augustine underlined the point by identifying—perhaps "defining" is a better word—the third level of vision (which he called "intellectual" vision) as error-free, since it was not dependent on images, only on varying degrees of intuition and understanding of pure abstractions. Here,

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[10] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. and ed. J. H. Taylor, 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, ca. 1982), 2:185, and 2:185–216 *passim*.

[11] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2:196. It was to this passage in Augustine's exposition of the three types of vision that Froidmont also directed readers of his commentary on 2 Corinthians 11:13–14, noting that Augustine had said how difficult it was to distinguish a devil from a (true) "angel of light."

an individual might be in unmediated and certain contact with God and so there was nothing problematic to discern. This (we have seen) is recognizably what Teresa of Avila—irrespective of suggestions that she was not sufficiently learned to know it—was seeking to achieve in talking of "feeling" rather than "seeing" spiritual presences and insisting that a vision could leave the senses undisturbed, and similar distinctions were evidently at work in the arguments of John of the Cross and Augustine Baker.

Writers of discernment theology could clearly not offer guidance for something that was charismatic when it applied at all, but they could draw up rules for discernment as a fallible, probabilistic, human capacity, exercised above all by churchmen. But what kind of rules? Their subject was charged with the task of separating genuine visual experiences from false ones—at the first and second levels, at least—without, in principal, being able to safeguard any of the visual (or sensory) criteria for doing so. This vulnerability clearly deepened during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Anthony Ossa-Richardson, through the lens of Voetius's scholastic Reformed critique, graphically demonstrates. In the face of it, discerners of spirits—from Jean Gerson (1363–1429) through to the eighteenth century—offered moral and psychological criteria for judging a particular spirit or vision, rather than attempting to decide on its purely visual trustworthiness. Guides to the practice came, above all, to reflect Gerson's interest in the character, disposition, experience, and life style of visionaries, his stress on the variables of sex, age, health, wealth, position, and emotional state, his concern for (what he listed as) "education, habits, likes, [and] associations," and, above all, his warnings about purpose and motive.

Of this outcome, the case of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi seems a perfect early example. Her experiences were witnessed, recorded, and eventually given official sanction by people who judged physical and moral demeanour, sanctioned by a community, to be more important guides to authenticity than content. In effect, those who judged her sanctity, like discernment theorists in general, conceded that human vision was not a natural process after all but was interpretable. The sheer extent of the early modern literature of discernment suggests a theological and practical absorption with these issues, and, it seems, an intractable problem.

2. *Discernment by Image*

The principal purpose of *discretio spirituum* was judging the merits of any ostensibly spiritual personal experience. Its problems as both a practical and a theological exercise have been obvious enough in several of the essays in this volume. But what of the realms beyond immediate experience? In his essay, Jan Machielsen has invited us to read the reformed hagiography of Jesuit and Bollandist scholarship as discernment *by text*—an extension into research, writing, and publication of the same need to authenticate. And, indeed, one wonders whether critical and textual scholarship might have come to appeal as a more decisive way of attributing sanctity and authorising belief than any attempt to sort out the pastoral and devotional complexities arising from 2 Cor. 11:13–14. But discernment *by image* ought also to be considered in this context. Religious art could hardly do anything but register the authenticity of its subjects and, during and after the Council of Trent, there was plentiful guidance about being more critical in this medium too. But aside from the image's own reliability, could it represent discernment itself as a reliable source of truth or did it too betray the problems inherent in the exercise? Specifically, what implications did the "angel of light" doctrine have for portrayals of sanctity?

A way to address this question is suggested by Michael Cole's intriguing commentary on an image of sanctity as canonical as Orazio Gentileschi's *St Francis and an Angel* (ca. 1600) [Figure 10.1], which Cole associates with the genre of the ecstatic visionary—in this case in the mediating presence of an angel who brings "seer and vision together." Yet, set against contemporary opinions about angels and their appearance to the eye, and in the context of *discretio spirituum* more broadly, the apparent certainty of Gentileschi's image becomes less obvious. Widely discussed ambiguities in giving spiritual beings naturalistic forms already meant that the angel need not have depicted what St Francis—or any sixteenth-century visionary—saw. More importantly, familiarity with 2 Cor. 11:13–14 would have told contemporaries that (as Cole puts it), "a whole family of competing creatures was intent on making those who witnessed [angels] believe that they were seeing angels when in fact they were not." Whatever the appearance of an angel—to a visionary or in a

Figure 10.1. Orazio Gentileschi, *St Francis and an Angel* (ca. 1600), Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Reproduced with permission from the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation.

painting like Gentileschi's—a demon could always look the same. In this sense, the broader world of discernment theology and visionary experience made it possible "to bring *too much* to the picture, to question what had to be secure." Cole eventually argues that "the difficulty, if not outright impossibility" in identifying angels and distinguishing them from demons led Italian painters of the period to give up trying to indicate their veracity by their appearance and concentrate instead on the position of the visionary.[12]

But if Gentileschi's *St Francis* invites us to ask how images distinguished genuine angels from demonic copies, we might equally ask how they distinguished the copies from the originals. If we cannot be sure that a depicted angel is indeed an angel, can we be any surer of its identity when it is not? "Angels of light" seem to have made only rare appearances in early modern religious art for understandable reasons: the risks were presumably too great. But in two picture-subjects they feature in striking and revealing ways. The first concerns a miracle performed by the thirteenth-century Dominican inquisitor and saint, Peter of Verona, known as St Peter Martyr. Accounts of the story vary but describe an encounter between Peter and some Milanese heretics—presumably Cathars—who were practising their religion in a church set up in a local nobleman's castle in the hope of converting him. One of the heretics, who is also a necromancer, manages to summon up a demon who appears, standing on the altar, "transformed" into the appearance of the Holy Virgin and holding "as it seemed, the most beautiful child in her hands."[13] Not having the gift of discernment, the nobleman cannot tell the difference between the demonic deception and "the

[12] Michael Cole, "Discernment and Animation, Leonardo to Lomazzo," in *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 133–42, author's italics; see 133, n. 1, for the problems in identifying this image as *St Francis and an Angel*, rather than as the *Stigmatization of St Francis*, which has also been used.

[13] Donald Prudlo, *The Martyred Inquisitor: The Life and Cult of Peter of Verona ([martyred] 1252)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 109; Christine Caldwell, "Peter Martyr: The Inquisitor as Saint," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 31 (2000): 137–74, here 158–59; Tommaso Agni da Lentino, "Vita," in *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis [. . .] tomus III. quo ultimi IX dies continentur*, ed. Godefroid Henschen and Daniel Papebroch (Antwerp, 1675), 686–719, here 693. Text available through the *Acta Sanctorum Database* (ProQuest), accessible online at: http://acta.chadwyck.co.uk. "pulcherrimum, ut videbatur, puerum manibus tenens."

truth of faith" and he duly becomes a Cathar. Realizing the danger, Peter celebrates Mass, consumes one consecrated Host and arms himself with a second, hidden under his cloak, and confronts the vision when it next appears. The "Virgin" then challenges him: "Brother Peter, who until now has opposed me, I, a loving mother, am prepared to obtain mercy for you from my son, if you leave the errors of the Roman Church."[14] At this point, Peter takes out the body of Christ and holds it up, replying: "If you are truly the mother of God, adore this your son," whereupon "the whole fantastic vision disappeared" with a terrible noise and smell, the church was reduced to rubble, and the nobleman was re-converted.[15]

The idea in medieval and early modern theology that the devil, even with divine permission, could control all natural causation, including that governing human vision, can still occasion surprise. That he could become an "angel of light"—mimicking sanctity, impersonating saints, faking miracles—seems even more alarming in its own terms, as well as intriguing enough historically to inspire a volume such as this one. But that he should pretend to be "transformed into the appearance and form of the beautiful and revered Madonna," accompanied by "a certain heavenly brightness [...] that lit up the whole church of the heretics," seems little short of astonishing.[16] Few artists appear to have tackled the subject of "St Peter Martyr unmasking the false Madonna," and those who did faced the obvious problem of how to indicate the falseness of the apparition without being able to use her incriminating conversation with the saint. This was solved in two ways: by departing from the textual accounts by adding visible marks of demonism to her form at the moment of its exposure, and by focusing on the moment when Peter discloses the Host and holds it aloft, thus making his act of discernment not a potentially fallible visual matter at all but a

[14] Agni da Lentino, "Vita," 694. "Fr. Petre, qui usque nunc mihi fuisti contrarius, ego pietatis mater parata sum a filio meo tibi misericordiam impetrare, si Romanæ Ecclesiæ errore relicto, horum meorum fidelium volueris adhærere consortio."

[15] Agni da Lentino, "Vita," 694. "Si es vere mater Dei, adora hunc filium tuum. Ad huius vocem & corporis Christi ostentationem omnis illa phantastica visio disparuit."

[16] Agni da Lentino, "Vita," 693. "In aspectu et forma speciosae et venerandae Dominae transfiguratus"; "splendor quidam quasi caelitus missus [...] qui totam illam haereticorum ecclesiam illustravit."

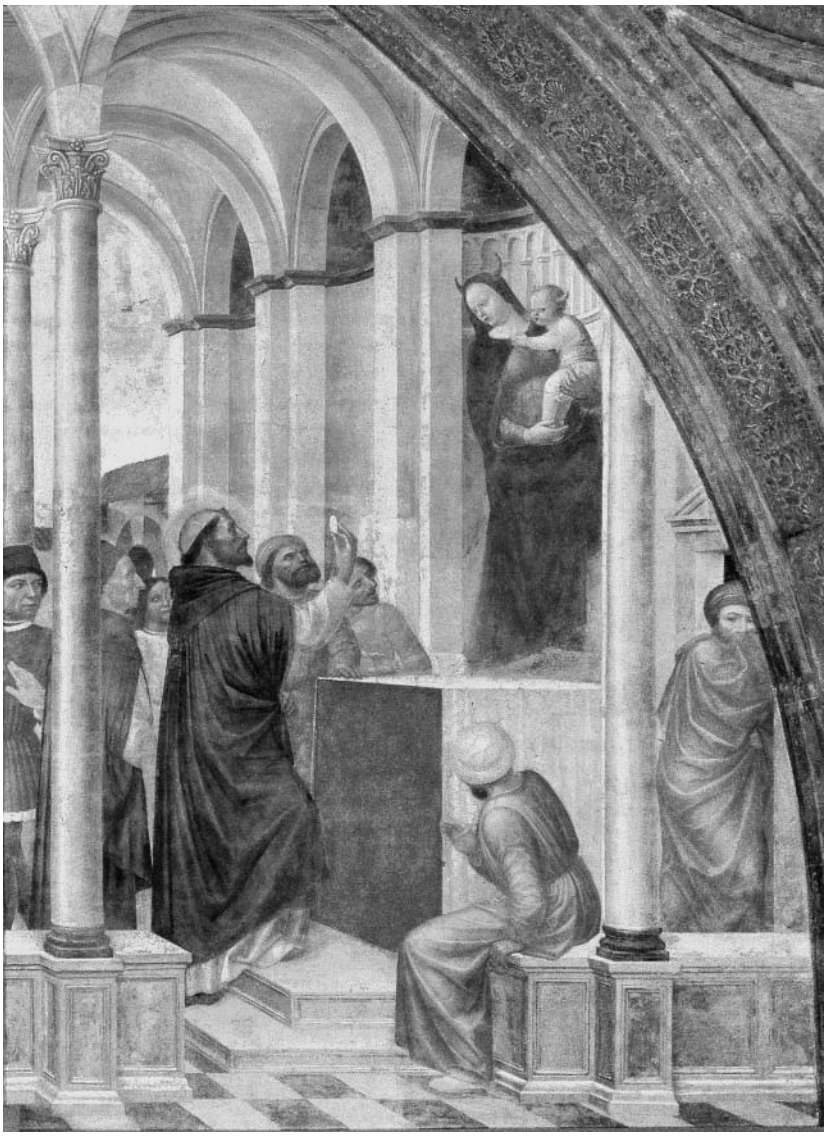

Figure 10.2. Vincenzo Foppa, *Miracle of the False Madonna* (ca. 1468), fragment of a fresco for the Portinari Chapel, Sant' Eustorgio Basilica, Milan. Reproduced with permission from the Mary Evans Picture Library.

miracle wrought (as he had prayed beforehand) by "the piety of Christ."

Horns and clawed feet must be unusual attributes in the iconography of the Virgin and Child but they appear separately in two fifteenth-century images devoted to this miracle. One is the fresc completed ca. 1460–68 by the bresciano painter Vincenzo Foppa for the Portinari Chapel in the Basilica di Sant'Eustorgio in Milan, which housed a shrine dedicated to St Peter. The fresco depicts two of his miracles, on the left "the miracle of the cloud" and on the right "the miracle of the false Madonna," and in the latter the added horns are ostentatious and conclusive, sprouting suddenly (according to one comment) as the apparition vanishes [Figure 10.2].[17] The claws appear in another equally dramatic early version, now in the Galleria Nazionale in Parma, by the Maestro del San Pietro Martire in a reredos depicting 19 scenes from the life of St Peter together with his effigy. In the scene devoted to the "false Madonna," as the saint holds up the host, devils are seen exiting through the roof of the church, confirming the "angel of light" doctrine in the most literal manner. Extraordinarily, the "Madonna" figure itself is shown breaking up, almost deflating, as it disintegrates under the force of the eucharist: the head tilts down to one side, and between the shoulders and the lower costume there is vacant space through which the wall behind can be glimpsed. Poking out below the hemline of what remains of the "Madonna's" garment are two feet, each with three black claws.[18] When we move to the very end of the seventeenth century, horns are still present in a third version of this Peter Martyr miracle, by Filippo Abbiati, the Lombard artist known for church paintings and frescoes and for having taught Alessandro Magnasco [Figure 10.3]. In this case, however, they are barely visible, half-hidden in shadow in a way that not only suggests stylistic reserve, even distaste, but also points to theological difficulties with

[17] John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 2nd ed. (London: Laurence King, 2001), 335; the authors refer to the false Madonna incorrectly as an "idol."

[18] Maria Cristina Chiusa, "Sul dossale di san Pietro martire. Un'ipotesi di lettura," *Bolletino d'arte* 56–57 (1989): 109–34, esp. 128–29, image no. 32. The scene is no. 11 in Chiusa's reconstruction of the 20 sections of the board.

Figure 10.3. Filippo Abbiati, *St Peter Martyr Unmasks the False Madonnna* (ca. 1700), Quadreria del Duomo, Milan. Reproduced with permission.

visual discernment.[19] Clearly, these three images were celebrations not so much of Peter Martyr as of the Holy Sacrament. Abbiati's painting was commissioned by the Arciconfraternita del Santissimo Sacramento of Milan Cathedral, and shows the false Madonna being blinded by a divine light emanating from the Eucharist. But there is a kind of metaphysical as well as sacramental overpowering at work here. Whenever theologians or philosophers talked about the actual means by which demons transformed themselves literally into "angels of light," one of the means discussed was the assumption of false—but truly apprehended—shapes either by the borrowing and/or animating of real bodies or by the creation of visible forms from air. Whatever the causation, the effect was the same; the separation of accidents from their substance. There was thus a unique symmetry in the victory of Peter over the false Madonna. The body of Christ, exhibiting miraculously the physical *species* of bread, had driven out the body of the demon exhibiting mendaciously the *species* of Christ's mother and, of course, of the child Christ himself—one set of separated accidents trumping another. If this returns us to the ambiguity of spirits, it also suggests that these images may have been concerned with potentially fallible visual matters after all.

3. *Images of St Anthony*

The most important context for the appearance of "angels of light" in early modern religious images, however, was the subject of the temptations of the third- to fourth-century Egyptian hermit St Anthony, depicted in an enormous number of early modern paintings and other art forms.[20] (Abbiati's *St Peter Martyr Unmasks the False Madonnna* also hangs in a cloister dedicated to St Anthony in Milan cathedral.) The vogue for treating this previously much less significant theme can be variously explained, but chief among the reasons

[19] Edoardo Arslan, *Le pitture del Duomo di Milano* (Milan: Ceschina, [1960]), 86–87, plate 157; Ettore Camesasca and Marco Bona Castellotti, eds., *Alessandro Magnasco, 1667–1749* (Milan: Electa, ca. 1996), 124.

[20] For lists of depictions, see Andor Pigler, *Barockthemen: Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974), 1:419–22; Karl Kunstle, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1926–28), 2:70–72; Mercedes Rochelle, *Post-Biblical Saints Art Index* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994), 12–18.

is Anthony's prominence in the traditions and literature of *discretio spirituum*. Of all the links between sanctity and discernment, those emerging from a lifetime spent under egregious demonic assault assumed particular significance. The temptations themselves—a mixture of physical brutality, sexual enticement, and demonic simulation—dominated the standard life of the saint by Athanasius of Alexandria, which also reported at length what he had said to his followers after overcoming them. Alongside a good deal of what was to become standard demonology, he had explicitly exhorted them to pray for the "gift of the discernment of spirits, so that we might not, as Scripture says, 'believe every spirit'." The St Anthony celebrated in early modern Europe was not merely the survivor of benchmark temptations; he was pre-eminently a man with the power to recognize what he himself called the "traits" of spirits—"which of them are less wicked and which more; and in what kind of pursuit each of them exerts himself, and how each of them is overturned and expelled."[21] Reinforcing this was his successful performance of exorcisms, another component of his *vita* that received treatment by Renaissance artists.

Key endorsements from two of the most influential theologians in the field cemented Anthony's reputation by singling him out from other discerners. The first was provided by Thomas Aquinas, who annotated the "angel of light" passage in 2 Cor. 11:13—14 by noting "that sometimes Satan completely changes his visible appearance [...]; and in this manner he deceives many. But the discernment of spirits, which God granted especially to St Anthony, is effective and necessary against this."[22] The second came from Jean Gerson, whose *De probatione spirituum* (On the Testing of Spirits, 1415) also acknowledged St Anthony's receipt of the charisma necessary for discerning spirits and praised the personal qualities that went with it: "Only those upon whom this gift has been conferred," he wrote of the saint, "are capable of conducting such examinations; whose anointing by the Holy Spirit instructs them in everything so

[21] Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. and intro. Robert C. Gregg (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 48 (para. 23).

[22] Thomas Aquinas, *S. Thomae Aquinatis [...] in omnes S. Pauli apostoli epistolas commentaria*, 2 vols. in 1 (Turin: Libraria Marietti, 1820), 1:495–96.

that they may be judges in all things."[23] By the sixteenth century, St Anthony had become a model for anyone doubtful about the source and credentials of a visionary religious experience and a source of the rules needed for deciding the issue.

One obvious way to interpret the many versions of "the temptations of St Anthony," therefore, is to see them as hagiographic—as the fairly unproblematic equivalent of his textual counterpart. This would be to view him in the light of a theological orthodoxy and as a reinforcement of its positive doctrines and values. The saint who appears in the paintings *is* in many ways Athanasius's hero, serenely resisting not only physical assault but also the state of mind he himself associated with demonism. Around him swarm demons of every conceivable kind, yet differentiated precisely by the "traits" his power of discernment was able to identify in them. In this straightforward sense, the theme was essentially reassuring. It allowed for portrayals of the successful deployment of the gift for discerning spirits in the most testing of circumstances, thus accounting for the popularity of the subject in devotional settings. Many of the images focus on what was, after all, usually the occasion (though not the solution) for the successful discernment of spirits: an act of seeing. The St Anthony of the artists exhibits a kind of visual composure in the face of what are invariably depicted as assaults on his eyes—above all, of course, visions and apparitions. He looks away, or through, or at something else, displaying what Larry Silver (in connection with Bosch) has called "right seeing."[24] He is accompanied by an open book which he attempts to focus on in an act of visual absorption, or he fixes steadfastly on a real or visionary crucifix. A typical example of this is the version by the reggiano painter Lelio Orsi from the 1570s [Figure 10.4], where St Anthony is pointedly not seeing what we see lurking in the shadows behind him. Several depictions centre on St Anthony's own "good" visions, making visual discernment even more central to their interpretation. Indeed, his temptations clearly take the form precisely of attempts to distract him from these various forms of right seeing. Emblematic of this

[23] Paschal Boland, *The Concept of "Discretio Spirituum" in John Gerson's "De Probatione Spirituum" and "De Distinctione Verarum Visionum a Falsis"* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 26.

[24] Larry Silver, "God in the Details: Bosch and Judgment(s)," *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001): 626–50, here 628.

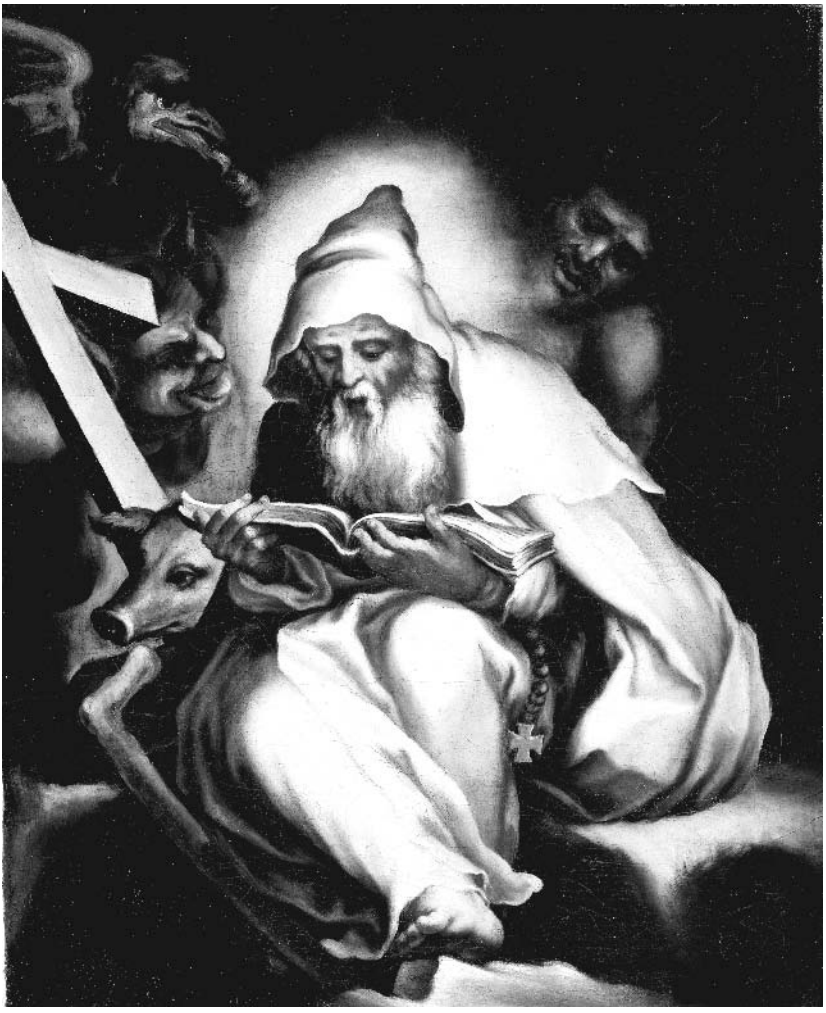

Figure 10.4. Lelio Orsi, *The Temptation of St Anthony* (ca. 1570s), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Reproduced with permission.

idea are the gaze that seems to hold our attention at the very epicentre of Bosch's famous Lisbon triptych and the inclusion at the epicentre of Jacques Callot's second *Temptation of St Anthony* of 1635 of a demon who attempts to put out St Anthony's left eye with the point of a pike.[25]

But were the travails of St Anthony so easily negotiated? What of those aspects of the discernment of spirits that must have been far less reassuring to those concerned with "right seeing"? St Anthony himself was well aware that the need for discernment arose from demonic simulation. He warned his followers against physical and mental temptation but also against what he called the fabricating of "phantasms" and "apparitions" by demons, their deceptive visions, their likeness to actors, and their readiness "to be changed and transformed into all shapes [...] so that by means of the similarity of form [to holy men] they deceive, and then drag those whom they have beguiled wherever they wish."[26] By the early modern period, Aquinas's demonic "semblances" of reality were ubiquitous in religious life and teaching, and St Anthony's promoters were increasingly faced with not just the difficulty but the impossibility of separating the divine from the diabolical just by looking at them. Ought not these issues too—the same intractability—to be apparent in artistic representations of the temptation of St Anthony? Alongside the celebration of the saint and his success in discerning demons, we should expect to find signs of the more troublesome aspects of the subject and, especially, of its inability to provide visual criteria for visual experiences. This is surely the sort of issue which *artists* in particular can be expected to have confronted and commented on—encouraged in this instance by potentially radical instabilities in the very visions they were seeking to depict. At the first two tiers of Augustine's hierarchy of seeing it had become impossible to achieve visual certainty, so that any attempt to discern the difference between the true and the false had to work with non-visual criteria. Of this visual aporia St Anthony was as much a victim

[25] For a discussion of this last detail, see Michel Picard, *La Tentation: essai sur l'art comme jeu: à partir de la Tentation de saint Antoine par Callot* (Nîmes: J. Chambon, 2002), 81. On Bosch's Lisbon tryptich, see Silver, "God in the Details," 632; cf. Joseph Leo Koerner, "Unmasking the World of Bruegel's Ethnography," *Common Knowledge* 10 (2004), 245.

[26] Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, ed. cit., 48 (para. 23), 50 (para. 25).

as anyone else, only his non-cognitive qualities—his moral qualities—endowing him with any capacity to discern between visually equivalent phenomena, and only Augustine's "intellectual" vision giving him unmediated and definitially incorrigible access to divine truth. How then could these issues be depicted in images? It seems unlikely that any of the versions of "the temptations of St Anthony" were attempts to capture an achieved, entirely image-*less* devotion, so obviously committed were they to portraying encounters with demons in the senses, alongside the saint's own preoccupation with two individual objects of sense—his book and his crucifix. Yet, the senses—outer and inner—were not to be trusted in such encounters. Only Anthony's consummate saintliness and state of grace—another concept that naturally looks increasingly definitional in this context to modern tastes—enabled him to overcome his visual temptations.

The St Anthony we see in the images, then, may very well be demonstrating a kind of non-visual Gersonian discernment in the face of his own visual temptations. But it would seem that all around him it is not the possibility of "right seeing" that is being taught but its impossibility—the paradox, indeed, of total sensory breakdown. Aquinas's suggestion that the skill of discernment accorded to St Anthony was "effective" against Satan's visual deceits now looks unworkable; the artists of discernment have moved the art of discernment onto the only level where it could succeed—the level of grace. A positive message about St Anthony as a model of discernment's moral dimension is accompanied by a negative message about discernment's epistemology.

The visual rhetoric of at least some of the images of St Anthony being tempted by demons does seem to refer to these difficulties—difficulties relating to what the Patinir scholar Reindert Falkenburg calls "the dialectic of inward and outward vision."[27] We need to concentrate not on the many versions where phantasmagorical creatures and monsters and/or seductive female temptresses are the demonic visions that dominate; such obvious "feigning" was in no need of discernment, strictly speaking. Instead we should look for signs of what Augustine called the "helplessness" that arises from equivalent visual phenomena—the kind of deep confusion

[27] Reindert L. Falkenburg, "The Devil is in the Detail: Ways of Seeing Joachim Patinir's 'World Landscapes'," in *Patinir: Essays and Critical Catalogue*, ed. Alejandro Vergara (Madrid: Museo Nacional de Prado, 2007), 64.

Figure 10.5. Paolo Veronese, *St Anthony Tempted by the Devil* (1552–53), Musée des Beaux Arts, Caen. Reproduced with permission.

threatened by the "angel of light" doctrine. Augustine wrote of the first two levels of vision: "The eyes are helpless when they see a body which resembles another body and which they cannot distinguish from the other; and the attention of the mind is helpless when in the spirit there is produced likeness of a body which it cannot distinguish from the body itself."[28]

Paolo Veronese's *St Anthony Tempted by the Devil* [Figure 10.5], for example, clearly returns us to the issues raised by Gentileschi's *St Francis*. It was commissioned for the new cathedral in Mantua in 1552 as one of four paintings for an altar dedicated to St Anthony. Here a saint collapses not into the arms of an angel but under the blows of a demon. But how do we (and how does St Anthony) know visually that this is a demon? With this uniquely physical and naturalistic treatment Veronese seems intent on conveying how effective demons could be in appearing to be something else. The male musculature, the bare female breast, and the realiztic portrayal of a fatal attack all combine to turn these particular demons into utterly convincing simulacra of human forms. The fact that the details that give the illusion away are themselves almost hidden from view—horns half-obscured by hair, claws as merely extended finger nails—only seems to underline the point. Tellingly, St Anthony's left hand is held over his face as protection both for his eyes and for "right seeing": in tearing it away these particular "angels of light" are forcing him to confront the degree of their discernability.[29]

If this version (one of two by Veronese) draws attention to the dangers of relying on the external senses, a drawing by Albrecht Dürer sends the same message about the internal ones [Figure 10.6]. It was made in 1515 for the margins of the Prayer Book of Emperor Maximilian I. The female temptress common in so many "temptations of St Anthony" is here accompanied by a demon who blows air into the saint's head through a bellows. We are now in the realm of the inner faculties, at level two of Augustine's model of vision, and the air carries with it—even literally—the *species* by which visual

[28] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. cit., 197.

[29] W. R. Rearick, *The Art of Paolo Veronese, 1528–1588* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, ca. 1988), 46–47; Ortrud Westheider and Michael Philipp, eds., *Schrecken und Lust: Die Versuchung des heiligen Antonius von Hieronymus Bosch bis Max Ernst* (Munich: Hirmer, n.d. [2008]), 132–33.

Figure 10.6. Albrecht Dürer, Temptation of St Anthony, from the Prayer Book of Maximilian I, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 10.7. Jan Wellens de Cock, The Temptation of St Anthony (ca. 1510–20). © 2012 Digital Image, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/SCALA, Florence.

cognition is achieved according to Aristotelian theory. Here, as Michael Cole again has noted, the demon "bypasses the outer instruments of sight altogether" and intrudes phantasms directly into the human brain. Such a temptation could obviously produce visual experiences where the internal senses were left "helpless"—left incapable of making cognitive distinctions. Pictures like this, he adds, draw on a model of how demonic manipulation could create what in German literature were called *Blendwerken* or *Blendungen*,

illusions that "could happen behind, no less than in front of, a viewer's eyes."[30]

Returning to the outer senses, perhaps the most thoroughgoing scepticism of all is shown in one of the many versions by the Antwerp painter Jan Wellens de Cock, a drawing from the second decdecade of the sixteenth century [Figure 10.7]. Wellens de Cock was certainly not averse to the demon-as-seductive-temptress theme and completed several versions of "the temptations of St Anthony" in that vein. But in this drawing he does something very different and, in the history of this genre, extraordinary. Here is our saint, praying as usual over his book, being tempted by six demons representing the five human senses. Sight is represented by the double-sided convex mirror: the more usual symbol in Netherlands art of the period was one-sided, and the skeletal face peering into the mirror was also common.[31] Taste is represented by the fish-like creature on the dish, hearing by the tinkling of the bell, and touch by the pair of lovers: again, the usual symbol of touch in early-modern Netherlands art was the caress (not always virtuous) of male fingers on female skin. Finally, smell is represented by a "nose" being "played" like some kind of a wind instrument. As usual, St Anthony is being taunted— the bell, ironically, is his own bell (almost universally present in images of the saint), and the male lover seems almost to have placed his left hand condescendingly on the saint's shoulder—but in this case the mockery is obviously directed at his (and our) capacity to know or discern anything via the use of the senses when they are so contaminable by demons. This includes their use to read a book. Portrayed in so many other versions and virtually inseparable from the saint, this object now looks much less convincing as an unambiguous image of Anthony's ability to see through the appearances that beset him, especially in the light of Augustine's location of the eventually very fallible sight of the outer senses in the reading of a *text* ("When we read this one commandment. . .").

[30] Michael Cole, "The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 621–40, here 625–26.

[31] On the iconography of the senses in the Netherlands (and elsewhere), see Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, ed., *Immagini del sentire: I cinque sensi nell'arte* (Cremona: Leonardo Arte, 1996).

In the light of these examples, the whole canon of versions of "the temptations of St Anthony" probably needs to be re-examined with questions about *discretio spirituum* in mind.[32] The subject may well have given some artists an opportunity to depict discernment not as a potentially successful spiritual exercise but as one that might be unattainable in any visual sense. Sight—whether with the eyes of the body or the eye of the mind—was unequal to this task in a world where demons could "make" both external and internal images and impose them on human cognition at will—transforming themselves, as Corinthians warned, into "angels of light."

[32] I am currently working on a project entitled *The Temptations of St Anthony and the Art of Discernment*, which I hope will address these issues.

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